

Bhawan Ruangsilp

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Dutch East India Company Merchants at the Court of Ayutthaya: Dutch Perceptions of the Thai Kingdom, c. 1604-1765

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TANAP MONOGRAPHS ON THE HISTORY OF ASIAN-EUROPEAN INTERACTION

Dutch East India Company Merchants
at the Court of Ayutthaya

TANAP Monographs on the History of the Asian-European Interaction

Edited by

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Dutch East India Company Merchants at the Court of Ayutthaya

*Dutch Perceptions of the Thai Kingdom
c. 1604-1765*

By
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SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Probably nowhere in the world have such profound changes in historiography been occurring as in the nation states of Monsoon Asia that gained independence after the conclusion of the Pacific War in 1945. These traditionally outward-looking countries on the rims of the Indian Ocean and the Eastern Seas have been interacting with each other through maritime transport and trade for more than two millennia, but the exigencies of modern nation-building have tended to produce state-centred historical narratives that emphasize a distinctive heritage and foster cultural pride and identity on the basis of such heroic themes as anti-colonial resistance. No one will deny the need for and utility of such "nation-building" agendas, but an inward-directed national historiography does not necessarily prepare one's citizens for our present age of regional co-operation and globalization.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the coastal societies of Monsoon Asia witnessed the entry of European traders, the emergence of global maritime trading networks, and the laying of the foundations of colonial empires that reached their apogees in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The difficulties of studying this pre-colonial and early colonial past should not be underestimated. Local sources are often rare because of wars and the frequent changes of both indigenous and colonial regimes. The hot and humid tropical climate is also unkind to the preservation of manuscripts. The mass of western-language data preserved in the archives of the former East India companies and those of the Spanish and Portuguese empires in Asia often have an undeniably Europe-centred character and bias. Thus we face not only a highly imbalanced supply of source material, but also the very complex problem of how to decode the hidden agendas that often colour these primary materials.

Over the past fifty years there has been a pronounced effort in academic circles in North America, Australia and the former European colonial nations to "decolonize" historical writing on Asian-European interaction, albeit for reasons totally different from those in their Asian counterparts. Increasingly doubt has been cast on such longstanding paradigms as the superiority of the dynamic West over static Asian societies. Historians of international trade such as the late Holden Furber, whose description of this period as "The Age of Partnership" inspired the name of the TANAP programme, have taken an interest in the various ways and means by which Asian-European interaction began in various kinds of competition, rivalry, collaboration, diplomacy, and military confrontation. This

approach has forced historians to return to the archival sources and the places where these events unfolded with the result that new frontiers of research have opened in which close partnerships between Asian and European historians, with their specific cultural tool kits and linguistic backgrounds, is now starting to reap fruit.

In anticipation of the four hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Dutch East India Company in 1602, members of the history department of Leiden University proposed the establishment of an international research programme aimed at training a new generation of Asian historians of Asian-European interaction in the early modern period. It was taken for granted that any such drive towards international educational co-operation should be carried out in carefully planned collaboration with the National Archives in the Hague, the Arsip Nasional of the Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta and the archives of Cape Town (South Africa), Colombo (Sri Lanka) and Chennai (India), which together hold several kilometres of archival data from the former *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*. The TANAP – Towards a New Age of Partnership – educational and archival preservation programme was started in 2000 thanks to generous grants from the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO), the Netherlands UNESCO commission, and Leiden University. Twelve universities in Asia sent some thirty young lecturers to Leiden during 2001-2003. Under the auspices of the Research Institute for Asian-African and Amerindian Studies (CNWS), these historians participated in an advanced master's programme that included intensive courses on historiography, palaeography and the old Dutch written language.

With additional funding from several Asian foundations, in 2002 seventeen of the TANAP graduates from Sri Lanka, India, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, China, Taiwan, Japan, South Africa, and the Netherlands began working towards a PhD degree at Leiden. Three others went on to pursue their doctorates at universities elsewhere in the world. The *TANAP Monographs on Asian-European Interaction*, which include two studies on early modern South African society, are the offspring of their doctoral theses defended at Leiden.

Leonard Blussé, University of Leiden

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BKI</i>	<i>Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië</i>
CIO	<i>Compagnie des Indes Orientales</i> , the French East India Company
EIC	The English East India Company
<i>JAS</i>	<i>Journal of Asian Studies</i>
<i>JSEAS</i>	<i>Journal of Southeast Asian Studies</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of the Siam Society</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>JRASSL</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Sri Lanka</i>
KITLV	<i>Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Leiden</i>
<i>MAS</i>	<i>Modern Asian Studies</i>
<i>SEAR</i>	<i>South East Asia Research</i>
SLNA	Sri Lanka National Archive
VOC	(Archives of the) <i>Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie</i> , the Dutch East India Company

GLOSSARY

C.: Chinese; D.: Dutch; M.: Malay; T.: Thai

<i>bahar</i>	(M.) a measure of weight: 1 <i>bahar</i> = 300 <i>catties</i>
<i>ban</i>	(T.) village; community under the responsibility of a <i>nai</i>
<i>bunga emas dan perak</i>	(M.) silver and golden flowers used as tributary gifts (<i>bu-nga mat</i> in Thai)
<i>catty</i> (Thai <i>chang</i>)	(M.) a monetary unit: 1 <i>catty</i> = about 112.8-144.0 guilders; a measure of weight: 1 <i>catty</i> = about 6 hectogram
<i>chao</i>	(T.) royalty, princes
<i>chaofa</i>	(T.) prince(s) born of a queen
<i>chulasakkarat</i>	(T.) the Lesser Era (CS)
<i>comptoir or factorij</i>	(D.) the local office of the VOC
<i>dagregister(s)</i>	(D.) diary/diaries
<i>kampong</i>	(M.) village; camp or settlement
<i>khunnang</i>	(T.) nobility, officials
<i>Khlang</i>	(T.) the Treasury Department
<i>krom</i>	(T.) household(s) of the prince(s); or administrative division(s) of the official(s)
<i>krommun</i>	
<i>kromkhun</i>	
<i>kromluang</i>	
<i>kromphra</i>	(T.) conferred ranks of the princes (in ascending order)
<i>Krom Tha Sai</i>	(T.) Department of Eastern Maritime Affairs and Crown Junks
<i>Krom Tha Khwa</i>	(T.) Department of Western Maritime Affairs
<i>laken</i>	(D.) woollen textile, broadcloth
<i>last</i>	(D.) a measure of weight: 1 <i>last</i> = 1,250 kilogram
<i>mahatlek</i>	(T.) royal page(s)
<i>nai</i>	(T.) master(s); head(s) of the <i>ban</i>
<i>namrak</i>	black liquid lacquer
<i>okmun, mun</i>	
<i>okkun, khun</i>	
<i>okluang, luang</i>	
<i>okphra, phra</i>	
<i>okya, phraya</i>	
<i>chao phraya</i>	(T.) ranks of Thai officials (in ascending order)
<i>opperhoofd(en)</i>	(D.) head(s) of VOC's local office in Ayutthaya
<i>phrai</i>	(T.) freeman, freemen
<i>prahu</i>	(M.) barge(s)
<i>Phrakhlang</i>	(T.) Ministry of External Relations and Maritime Trading Affairs of Ayutthaya, its Minister
<i>phutthasakkarat</i>	(T.) the Buddhist Era (BE)
<i>recognitiegelden</i>	(D.) fees given by the VOC to the Siamese Treasury Department in lieu of taxes
<i>(recognitiepenningen)</i>	
<i>resident</i>	(D.) head of the VOC's local office, lower-ranking than <i>opperhoofd</i>
<i>rijksdaalder(s)</i>	(D.) coin. 1 <i>rijksdaalder</i> = about 3 guilders
<i>roede(n)</i>	(D.) a measure of length: 1 Amsterdam <i>roede</i> = 4.53 metres
<i>sangha</i>	(T.) Buddhist clergy
<i>sakdi na</i>	(T.) dignity marks

<i>tael</i> (Thai <i>tamlueng</i>)	(C.) a monetary unit: 20 <i>taels</i> = 1 <i>catty</i> ; a measure of weight: 1 <i>tael</i> = 30 gram
<i>tra</i>	(T.) seal; official document carrying a seal
<i>Syabbandar</i>	(M.) harbour master
<i>Uparat</i>	(T.) the second-highest-ranking prince after the king, often heir apparent
<i>wat</i>	(T.) Buddhist temple
<i>wang</i>	(T.) palace, princely residence
<i>Wangna</i>	(T.) the Front Palace, the residence of the <i>Uparat</i>

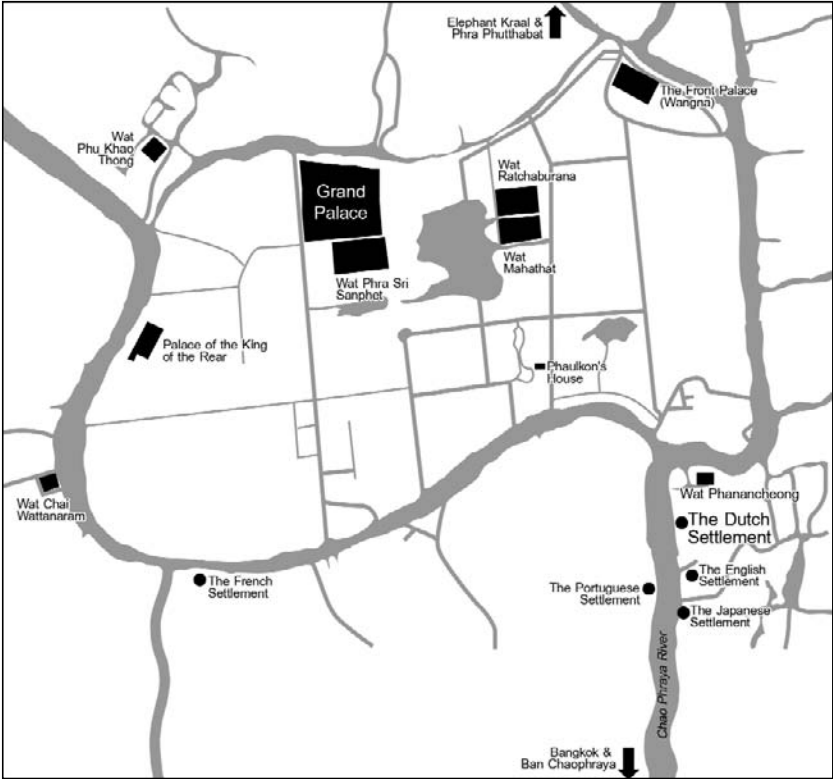
Map 1 The Kingdom of Ayutthaya in Asia



Map 2 The Kingdom of Ayutthaya and its Neighbours



Map 3 Ayutthaya and its Surroundings



INTRODUCTION

The period between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries was labelled an 'Age of Partnership' between Europeans and Asians by Holden Furber. He asserted that relations between European traders and settlers and their hosts in the Asian environments during these centuries were based on mutual respect and partnership, which distinguishes this period from the following 'Age of Imperialism'.¹ In her pioneering study *To Live as Brothers*, Barbara Watson Andaya has later suggested that we should view the early modern European-Asian interactions against the background of a more general process in which Europeans began to see themselves as significantly different from the rest of the world. 'As Europe's mercantile interests reached out further into the non-European environment, it was commonly in the marketplace and the audience hall that a sense of these differences was keenest.'² In his study using European *published* source material, Jürgen Osterhammel names the eighteenth century as the time of 'die Entzauberung Asiens', the disenchantment with Asia, in the European view. The loss of fascination with the Orient was the logical consequence of the rise of Euro-centrism in the European intellectual world.³

This work examines the interactions between the European employees of the Dutch East India Company, or the VOC as is its Dutch acronym, and the members of the royal court of Ayutthaya, usually referred to as the Kingdom of Siam in contemporary Western sources. I argue that these contacts, which took place in and around the audience hall, exemplify the co-existence of 'partnership'—conditional rather than born of authentic mutual respect—and 'sense of differences'. To study them will broaden our understanding of how the participants in these cross-cultural interactions managed, tried, or failed to work in partnership and to balance their differences.

Previous Studies

The relations between Ayutthaya and Europe have been generally examined as part of the study of the history of Thailand. Only a few case studies have been dedicated to the specific aspects of the historical relationship itself. Some of them accentuate contrasting cultural models and conflicts, while others take the position that a conditional partnership and balance of interests did indeed exist.

Studies adapting the first approach often concentrate on the seventeenth century, especially the reign of King Narai (r. 1656-88), when Ayutthaya became deeply entangled in an alliance with the French. The earliest works, by John Anderson and E. W. Hutchinson, point to enthusiasm of Siam for the West in the seventeenth century, in contrast with the scepticism of the Thai towards the Europeans in the following century. Hutchinson, whose work is based on English and French sources, argues the turning point was the Palace Revolution of 1688 which marked the end of the openness of King Narai's Siam to the outside world, and the beginning of the era of self-isolationism under the Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty (1688-1767)—starting with the former leader of the revolution, King Phetracha (r. 1688-1703)—which ultimately prevented Siam from catching up with Western progress.⁴ Hutchinson's interpretation fits in well into the broader discourse on the history of eighteenth-century Ayutthaya which revolves around the theme of 'decline'.⁵ This perception of the decline of Ayutthaya among historians is undoubtedly influenced by its disastrous defeat at Burmese hands in 1767.

In more recent studies, Dirk van der Cruysse focuses on the story of the unsuccessful trade and the failed 'colonization of souls' by the French in Siam between the 1660s and 1680s. Contrary to Hutchinson, who blamed the nationalistic and anti-foreign attitudes of the revolutionary leaders for the breach between the Thai and the French in 1688, Van der Cruysse has emphasized the contrastive mentalities between host and guest, but especially the intolerance on the French side.⁶

More light has been shed on the partnership between the Europeans and the Thai during the early modern period by those who have researched the VOC-Dutch sources. In his pioneering work using these sources to study Thai history, George Vinal Smith examined the development of political, commercial, and social contacts between the Dutch and the Thai in the seventeenth century. His research both undermines the notion of the superiority of the VOC in terms of organization and capital as the springboards which gave it an advantage over its competitors and emphasizes the study of the cruciality of diplomatic relations as an aspect of the Company's dealings with Ayutthaya, determined merely by the perceived relative importance of the commercial potential of the kingdom.⁷ In his survey of the relations between Thailand and the Netherlands—also covering the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—Han ten Brummelhuis ascribes the VOC-Dutch merchants the additional roles of diplomats and courtiers.⁸ The multifarious qualities of the VOC employees in Siam reflect both the adaptability of the Europeans to the local situation and the strength of the Asian host society which forced the Europeans to adapt. Various works using the VOC sources by Dhiravat na Pombejra have demonstrated how the Dutch survived politically and

continued to maintain their presence in Siam, even after the expulsion of the English and then the French in the 1680s. The continuing commercial contacts of Siam with the Dutch and other foreigners disprove the notion that, after the 1688 Revolution, the kingdom had withdrawn from contacts with the outside world. Eighteenth-century Ayutthaya was by no means in decline; instead, the kingdom and its court were still commercially and culturally prospering.⁹

Older studies have tended to explain the Dutch naval blockade of the mouth of the Chao Phraya River in 1663 and 1664 as the outcome of Western colonialist ambition, and have argued that King Narai consequently used the English and the French to counterbalance a Dutch threat.¹⁰ Tempering this, the revisionist view points out the limited nature of the friction between the Ayutthayan court and the VOC in the 1660s.¹¹ Dhiravat has suggested that, if King Narai had tried to play off the European powers against each other, the need for a 'closer' French alliance to relieve the pressure exerted by the Dutch would have arisen later, in the 1680s, when the VOC had become a real power in the region and had begun to pursue a more robust policy in its dealings with the King. However, once again, both sides were willing to solve the conflict quickly and by peaceful means.¹²

Two studies deal particularly with Ayutthayan court society and culture in the seventeenth century as seen through eyes of the Westerners. In his anthropological analysis of the ritual surrounding the Siamese kings, Jeremy Kemp has again pointed to the cultural differences: the inability of the European observers to see that the whole concept of Siamese kingship justified whatever the king chose to do.¹³ Another work by Dhiravat shows that Western observers were more perceptive and sometimes flexible in their interpretations. They did not feel that ritual and politics were the sole important factors in Siamese court life, but also took account of the 'trivia' of life, such as the material culture at court. It was from these factors that the Europeans acquired their understanding of the power of their host, on whose mercy their personal and professional lives relied.¹⁴

The Topic

If the title of the monograph suggests a Eurocentric view of Dutch-Thai relations, this is, in a sense, inevitable since a study of the interactions between Europe and Ayutthaya on equal terms is restricted by the limited number of indigenous—written and archaeological—sources. To overcome the scarcity of Thai sources and expand their knowledge of Thai society, historians of Ayutthaya have been forced to seek evidence in foreign sources. Among these foreign records are the archives of the VOC,

which, despite their accessibility, are still under-explored for the study of Thai history. Given the great length and the organizational character of its presence in Thailand, the VOC was the only (European) outsider which systematically documented changes and developments in Ayutthaya from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the disintegration of the kingdom in the wake of Burmese invasions, which reached a fatal climax in early 1767. Notwithstanding their long presence and involvement, the Dutch are virtually absent from the royal chronicles of Ayutthaya. Therefore, the scantiness of Thai sources forces us to make an effort to undertake a close, non-partisan reading of Dutch perceptions of Ayutthaya to learn about Dutch-Thai relations.

In a broad sense, perception can be defined as a 'cognitive', 'active', and 'selective' search of an 'ordered world'.¹⁵ Perceiving itself is an act of construction which is guided by the pre-concept of the observer as well as influenced by the immediate circumstances around him. The concept of 'cross-cultural interaction', which serves as my analytical category, reminds us of the reciprocal character of the exchange between host and guest, as Jurrien van Goor posits:

One of the great advantages of this model is that questions such as whether to employ a European or Asia-centred approach lose their importance and relevance. Interaction presupposes that all players are taken equally seriously and that no one will be consigned to the side-scenes beforehand.¹⁶

Although we have to rely rather heavily on Dutch perceptions, we will only be able to really understand them if we try to comprehend the local environment in which the Dutch were functioning.

From the beginning of the sixteenth century, actively participating in an 'Age of Commerce' in Asia,¹⁷ a considerable number of Thai—elite and non-elite—came into contact with a novelty, European merchants and missionaries in Asia. Admittedly, the Dutch observers did not completely ignore the life and plight of commoners. Yet, being traders, they naturally focused their attention on the institution which controlled Ayutthaya's foreign trade: the royal court, which was both the major agent in Thai society, politics, and culture, and the key partner of the Dutch. Especially, the close link between the political power and the economic dominance of the Thai court elite constantly forced the Dutch to look for 'who' were in power—to grant or to obstruct their wishes—and how to reach or avoid these 'who'. For that reason, a thorough knowledge of the state of power relations—both within Siamese court society and between this host and themselves—was essential to the survival of the Dutch in Siam. In the context of this study, following Ten Brummelhuis I consider the Company men not purely as merchants but also as diplomats and courtiers. Siam offers an interesting case study showing how foreign agents like the VOC employees worked their way into a local

system, becoming embedded in it and yet remaining different from it.

It is important to investigate how power was negotiated and contested in the everyday reality of the court of Ayutthaya because, as David K. Wyatt has asserted: '[The] king was theoretically absolute, but in everyday reality, power in this political system was constantly being negotiated and contested; and royal "absolutism" was more an ideal to be striven for than a reality already achieved.'¹⁸ The VOC men, too, looked for clues to power relations which they found not only by asking who had the legitimacy to impose the rule of law and to use force, but also, equally important, by analysing the expressions of power and authority in the 'pomp' of court ritual¹⁹ and in observing the collective and individual behaviour of the court members. The last point was extremely important to bear in mind in the political and bureaucratic culture of Ayutthaya, the acquisition and display of wealth, and the processes of access to and control of information.

The author of this work also wants to ascertain how the VOC-Dutch observers developed their processes of understanding and representing the Siamese court, and what factors were decisive in the construction of Dutch knowledge of the court and in the creation of a sense of difference between the two cultures. This constructed knowledge may not always have been accurate from a present-day historian's viewpoint, or would necessarily correspond to the self-perception of the early modern Thai. I attempt to analyse the historical construction of codes of practice, which, in the case of the Dutch in Thai society, defined right and wrong, normal and abnormal, agreeable and not agreeable. These perceptions certainly affected the relationships between the VOC and the Siamese court. Yet, we must also remind ourselves that they did not always determine the actions of the Dutch. In many cases, the ultimate decisions were influenced by the interaction between circumstances both in Siam and in the wider worlds of Asia and Europe. Importantly, discrepancies between perception and action often arose out of the ultimate incompatibility between cultural models, on the one hand, and pragmatism, on the other.

The Observer: The Dutch East India Company, 1602-1796

[I]t is commonplace and to a certain extent the truth to say that the Dutch East India Company is not just a Company of commerce but also of state.

Thus wrote Coenraad van Beuningen, a director of the Dutch East India Company (Amsterdam Chamber), of his company in 1685.²⁰ In a similar vein, scholars have referred to the VOC as a 'merchant-warrior'²¹ and a 'merchant prince'²², which also suggests the hybrid character—commercial and political—of the institution.²³ Established in 1602, it was

designed to be a device both of maritime trade and of war, in the context of the highly competitive European overseas expansion continuing from the previous century and of the prolonged independence struggle between the Dutch Republic and the Spanish Habsburg monarchy since 1568. Once it had set foot in Asia, this commercial maritime power developed into a territorial ruler as well. It not only took over existing trading routes but also styled itself a government according to local circumstances. If the Company were a hybrid itself, the behaviour of the men it employed was also ambivalent, as Reinout Vos sums up, in so doing reflecting the views of many scholars:

How could the champion of the free seas and republicanism so easily become the servant of a rigidly hierarchical organization that embodied everything so despised in the homeland: monopolism rather than private trade; 'mare clausum' rather than 'mare liberum', and monarchism rather than a government of free citizens.²⁴

As an association of private merchants, the VOC was determined to act as independently as possible in Asia. Its founding charter allowed it a great deal of freedom in negotiating trade, concluding treaties, and waging war in the world east of the Cape of Good Hope. The Company was entitled to build and govern forts and settlements, to appoint officials in the field, and to oversee the Dutch Reformed Church in Asia. Yet, in some aspects, it remained answerable to the States General of the Republic, which periodically reviewed the general state of affairs in the East and approved the instructions to the VOC Governors in Asia. Hence, the military and naval commanders and diplomats of the Company in the East were required to swear a double oath of allegiance, to both the Company and the States General.²⁵ In the Netherlands, direction and control were exercised by the executive board, the Meeting of the Gentlemen Seventeen (*Heren XVII*). In Asia, the Governor-General stood at the apex of the administration, presiding over the High Government (*Hoge Regering*) in Batavia, and governed with the consent of the Council of the Indies (*Raad van Indië*). The High Government's policies were implemented by the local directors of the VOC's trading-posts (*factorijen* or *comptoirten*) all over Asia.²⁶

Soon, the VOC realized that direct trade between Europe and Asia alone would not be sufficient to enable it to survive, since there were not enough goods and money coming in from Europe to pay for the Asian commodities required. The Company tried to solve the problem by increasing its share in the intra-Asian trade as much as possible. Its primary goal was to acquire precious metals (especially from Japan) to trade for the goods it obtained elsewhere in Asia, in their turn for the purchase of the Asian products needed for Europe.²⁷

The position of the VOC differed from place to place, as did its

strategy and success. All these were determined by the strengths and weaknesses, or the degree of co-operation and resistance, of the indigenous elite and the local system.²⁸ For example, while the Dutch were successful in their ongoing attempt to dominate the Indonesian Archipelago, they had no option but to adjust to the markets and politics of China and Japan. Leonard Blussé has defined the main strategies of the VOC in conducting foreign relations as 'conqueste' and 'schenkagie'. The former represented the 'conquest of land or the coercion of favourable trade conditions through the medium of violence'; the latter stood for the 'pursuit of favourable trading conditions through gifts and diplomacy'.²⁹ Both these methods to achieve a monopoly position in the desired commodity might prove to be a financial risk at times, especially when the Company failed to obtain the commercial advantages it needed.

Commercial gain and territorial expansion were inseparable parts of the Company's dealings in its interaction with both its European competitors and its Asian counterparts. The Dutch developed their footholds in Asia by seizing strategic maritime locations from indigenous rulers as well as from other European colonizers. After their first arrival in the Indonesian Archipelago in 1595, they managed to seize Jakarta and convert it into their rendezvous, Batavia, in 1619, a move which allowed them to co-ordinate their shipping operations in the Indian Ocean and the China Sea.³⁰ In some cases, the Company allowed itself to be drawn into Asian or Asian-European conflicts by indigenous rulers who sought to make use of Dutch power, notably in and around Java. In Ceylon (Sri Lanka), the King of Kandy, too, asked the VOC to help expel the Portuguese, but in fact only replaced one foreign occupant with another. Political conflicts in Europe were used to justify European actions in Asia: the Dutch attacked the Portuguese in the East on the grounds that Portugal was, between 1580 and 1640, in a political union with their enemy, the Spanish Crown. They outmanoeuvred the Portuguese in Japan and in Ceylon in the 1630s and ultimately captured Malacca from them in 1641. However, their attempts to attack Portuguese Macao and Spanish Manila failed. After 1700, the maritime expansion of the VOC was stopped and the emphasis was shifted to a territorial development of power, especially in Java and Ceylon; the Dutch had become a 'saturated' power in both Europe and Asia.³¹

In early modern Asia, in many cases foreign traders had to negotiate directly with the local rulers who kept a close control of trade and exercised their supervision from their court. A trading company like the VOC had to provide its employees with diplomatic credentials which would allow them to access these 'royal merchants' according to local protocol.³² The Governor General and Council in Batavia were fully authorized to send out envoys and to receive foreign representatives. Consequently,

while the power of the Company was growing, the High Government of Batavia also developed into a centre of diplomacy and diplomatic ritual.³³ The foreign rulers with whom the Company maintained relations can be classified into four categories. At the top of the tree, there were the imperial rulers, such as the Great Mughal of India, the Shah of Persia, the Emperor of China, and the Shogun of Japan. The second group consisted of powerful princes who exercised sovereignty over surrounding vassal states and yet themselves lived in a tributary relation to the rulers of the first category, among them the King of Siam who was the suzerain of some adjacent polities but also regularly sent tribute to the Chinese Emperor. Thirdly, there were princes whose loyalty shifted from one suzerain to another. The last group was made up of petty rulers who sometimes submitted to sovereign rulers, and sometimes to other, non-sovereign rulers.³⁴

From the 1680s, the VOC could no longer rely on the export of Japanese precious metals and had to withdraw from or adapt itself in several areas in the network of the intra-Asian trade. Although by then the Company was facing greater difficulties, such as coping with the shifting pattern of European demand for Asian commodities, corruption among its personnel, and competition from the English, it managed to survive till the end of the eighteenth century. It was the last Anglo-Dutch War (1780-4) which eventually ruined the financial resilience of the VOC and propelled the Company into bankruptcy in 1796, before it was formally dissolved on 1 January 1800.³⁵

At an early stage of the encounter between Europe and Asia, their societies were actually not much different. In many places, the Europeans and the Asians were experiencing a growing bureaucratic style of government which strove to accomplish the centralization of power and resources; a rise of a commercial elite; social order maintained by harsh judicial procedures; and societies in which pomp and circumstance were a means to economic, social, and political power.³⁶ In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Europeans explained their distinctiveness from and superiority to non-Western peoples in terms of their observance of Christianity—as a religion and as a culture—since this was deemed to indicate a higher level of morality, rather than deriving it from their mastery of the material world, especially production of goods and trade practices. Most early European observers possessed only a limited knowledge of the scientific and technological accomplishments of their age, with the exception of the advance in weaponry and warships. Many of them often were impressed by the material culture of the upper classes in India, China, Japan, and some South-East Asian states. However, Europeans soon became aware of their increasing differences from the rest of the world—intellectually and materially—, differences which were partly generated by their growing

knowledge of and competition with Asian cultures. Scientific advances, the ideas of the Enlightenment and constitutional monarchy shaped the way how Europeans looked at Asian religions, life-styles, and forms of government. The Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth century, followed by the communications and medical revolutions in the following century contributed to the improvement in the quality of life in the West. During these processes, technology became the main tool to measure human achievement from the European point of view.³⁷

The VOC was a European institution which, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, increasingly exerted a formative effect on knowledge of Asia in Europe.³⁸ The motivations which inspired the Company men to observe, understand, and write about Asia were both professional and personal. The VOC needed all the information about the host society which could be used in initiating and maintaining commercial contact. At a personal level, this knowledge was passed down from one generation of employees to another and, more publicly, it was disseminated in Europe in published form. At yet another level, the VOC itself underwrote and published—at a later stage with its own printer—works it deemed useful, including cartography, translations, for example of the Bible and of the Catechism, as well as foreign-language dictionaries. These publications suggest that the VOC was not as secretive about the knowledge it accumulated as it was believed to have been.³⁹

The VOC offered the men in its service, mostly Dutch but also from the neighbouring countries, such as the German states and Sweden, direct, empirical experience of Asian cultures and societies. Although the Company itself was not a society of intellectuals, its employees as a whole produced a considerable number of ethnographic accounts of the wider world. Some were motivated to write by the chance to advance their career in the Company.⁴⁰ A few were stimulated by the growing intellectual hunger in Europe which encouraged the search for knowledge of the outside world.⁴¹ Others were tempted to reap the fruits of the growing commercial opportunities provided by the burgeoning publishing world in Europe.⁴²

The Observed: The Court of Ayutthaya, c. 1600-1767

'Absolute power' and 'splendour' are the themes usually highlighted in European descriptions of the royal court of Ayutthaya from the sixteenth century.⁴³ 'Avarice' also appears frequently in the accounts of European traders like the Dutch. Although these basic European perceptions of the Siamese court were based on European norms and, sometimes, on the particular situations in which the observers found themselves, they do in

a way reflect the interests and problems of the court and its members. As an introduction to what stood on the other side of these perceptions, the following paragraphs will focus on the centrality of the king in Ayutthaya society, the relations between power and pomp in court ritual, and the relations between power and wealth accumulated through trade.

To comprehend the behaviour and attitudes of the Ayutthayan court in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is essential to understand Thai kingship, since that was the fundamental reason for the court's existence. As other principalities in South-East Asia, the Ayutthayan state and kingship portrayed itself to itself as an 'undivided and centered unit[y], which denied dualities of any sort—challenge, instability, and the possibility of de-centering' and sought to 'remain central: to remain unchallenged, immobile, and eternally stable'.⁴⁴ In this case, the necessity to remain central—both in the normative and, therefore, in the power field—equated the need to stand above the rest. The centrality of the king fundamentally shaped the legal and administrative structures and the social hierarchy of which he was the zenith. The system of *sakdi na*—proclaimed during the reign of King Trailok (r. 1448-88)—theoretically defined the social status of a person in terms of the amount of land in his possession. In his capacity as *Chao Phaendin* (Lord of the Land), the king theoretically allotted land to his subject according to the latter's social status. His absolute power was founded upon his lawful claims to the life and property of individuals and his privileged position permitting him to take possession of and redistribute land, resources, and manpower to his clients.⁴⁵

As aims to be achieved rather than everyday reality, Ayutthaya's 'absolute' kingship and 'centralized' administration had gone through numerous changes, often in response to the immediate experience of challenges.⁴⁶ Its rulers were much concerned with the questions of legitimacy and control of resources. The unlimited power of the king was a dilemma because, on the one hand, it led to the abuse of power, and, on the other hand, attracted challenges from other power-seekers.⁴⁷ Apart from rebellions in the provinces and the wars waged with vassal states and neighbouring polities which sporadically threatened the integrity of the kingdom, the Ayutthayan court itself was rife with intrigues, coups, and succession disputes.

Though designed to serve its ruler, the royal court could not avoid serving the interests of its other members: 'order and disruption is the result of the same impulse: the desire to become higher and closer to the centre for fulfilment of their ambitions'.⁴⁸ The court members—royal and noble, men and women, indigenous and foreign—were paradoxically the king's closest allies and his most dangerous enemies. Although the courtiers were subjected to the king's whims, they were also in a position to manipulate

information to and from him—and hence to influence his opinion and actions to their own advantage.

The situation was all the more complex since the succession laws were not clearly set out or sufficiently enforced. The idea of the sanctity of kingship derived from a 'mixed cultural background' did not prevent irregularities and abuses.⁴⁹ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, succession conflicts occurred at almost every change of reign. There were rivalries among the principal *chao* (royalty/princes), as well as struggles between them and the powerful *khunnang* (nobility/officials). King Naresuan (r. 1590-1605) discontinued the tradition of giving the *chao* the governorship of important provinces. From the reign of King Prasatthong (r. 1629-56) and thereafter, the provincial governors, except those of Tenasserim and Nakhon Sithammarat, referred to as Ligor in European records, were obliged to spend more time under the king's supervision in Ayutthaya than in their provinces. Between the reigns of Narai and Thaisa (r. 1709-33), large *krom* (households) of the royal princes were created to keep the officials in check. But then again, King Borommakot (r. 1733-58) created smaller *krom* for the *chao* to counterbalance each other and to offset the *krom* (administrative divisions) of the *khunnang*. These changes were effective in lessening the threat of a large-scale provincial revolt led by a powerful governor, but conversely, through the concentration of the principal princes and officials in Ayutthaya, they increased factional fighting at court.⁵⁰ Individual *khunnang* and the whole administration were affected by the irregularities and uncertainties caused by the dependence of officials on royal favour. The upshot was there was no real hereditary nobility but only a 'loose *khunnang* class'.⁵¹

Consequently, the ruler of Ayutthaya relied less on any institutional backup such as the bureaucracy and the rules of succession, and more on his 'personal rule'.⁵² He maintained his position through his ability to exercise control and patronage, and to create awe-inspiring splendour.

Both Thai royal chronicles and the foreign sources offer ample documentation of the recurrent recourse to violence in Ayutthaya politics. In practice, the king ruled by harshness rather than by the exercise of the kingly virtues. In his turn, a failure to respond to challenges had fatal consequences for the king himself, his family, and followers. Although kinship was used to forge alliances, it was no life-saving guarantee. The permanent political struggles between court factions and their destructive effects (notably the purges)—in short, weak collective political leadership—are regarded as one of the causes of the structural weakness which contributed to the fall of the kingdom in 1767.⁵³

If culture is defined simply as a set of shared meanings which reflect beliefs and determine common ritual, practices, and the expression of attitudes within a particular group, the ideas of kingship and the code of

conduct regarding the king was the essence out of which Siamese court culture arose. A shared dependence on the king's favour—a common interest/obsession—defined the membership of the court.⁵⁴ Since power or spiritual potency is invisible, the rulers had to make sure that 'the signs of potency—wealth, status, and influence—were under their control with restricted access, and to be perceived'.⁵⁵ Ayutthaya court culture was designed to create a social hierarchy, which 'demanded that, where a difference in social level existed between individuals, it was accompanied by a corresponding spatial separation in height and sometimes distance'.⁵⁶ To make power perceivable, the extensive use of ritual and symbols of status and honour was important, the more so because of the ill-defined nature of the laws of succession⁵⁷ and the abstract nature of the internal force of *karma*.⁵⁸ The models of the Khmer cult of *devaraja* (god-king), which is highly ritualistic and expressive in character, had been integrated into Ayutthaya court culture; they helped express outward dignity of the office through ceremonies, titles, and regalia. These were made symbols capable of commanding fear and respect.⁵⁹ The Palatine Law of 1468/9 (*kot mon-thian ban*) prescribed the conduct of the king and court members, for example, the rule of the twelve-monthly cycle of ceremonies which governed the public activities of the king within a given year. Representation of power was found in architecture and the organization of landscape, too. Many foreigners witnessed the splendour—reification of power—of the Ayutthayan king at the most important royal buildings: the royal palaces (*wang*) and the temples (*wat*).

The display of wealth was an important part of Siamese court life. Acts of public generosity—mostly grand-scale merit-making and the building or renovating of religious monuments—were significantly considered one of the king's virtues; they brought the distant figure of the semi-divine ruler closer to people and, yet, confirmed his material and spiritual superiority. Admittedly, even the prominent officials were supposed to be modest in their life-style, unless they were stationed outside the capital where both their distance from the king and their role as his representative allowed them to act like a mini-king. However, the rulers also encouraged competitive displays of wealth among the *khunnang* particularly in building temples, perhaps partly as a means to add splendour to their capital and partly to prevent the officials from spending their resources on other, perhaps treacherous activities.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the consumption of luxurious foreign goods was used to distinguish the court elite from the rest of society. The king gave, for example, imported Indian textiles to reward someone for his service or as courtesy gifts to foreign visitors.⁶¹ Yet, the nobles and some of the commoners grew increasingly eager to buy foreign textiles and other imports, too.⁶²

To create, maintain and enhance his power, either by strengthening his

military force, by controlling the political and social position of his officials (also by 'buying' their alliance), or by convincing the rest of society of his material and spiritual superiority, the Ayutthayan King needed the skills required to mobilize human and material resources. Since its legendary foundation in 1351, the state of Ayutthaya had developed a bureaucratic administration, codified its laws, and organized and taxed its economy, all of which were responsible for its internal cohesion and external recognition as one of the strongest territorial powers in South-East Asia and an active participant in Asian trade.⁶³ In response to the structural lack of manpower, the *corvée* system (*rabop phrai*) was designed to implement the claim of the ruling class to use the freemen (*phrai*) in its attempt to procure their services for political and economic purposes.⁶⁴

Without denying the fundamental significance of agriculture to the economy of Ayutthaya, it is in the interest of this study to emphasize the importance of foreign, especially maritime trade for it explains the kingdom's need of contacts and partly its openness to the outside world as well as its acceptance of the presence of the Europeans. Ayutthaya was a 'port-polity': functioning both as a capital city (political centre) and as a port town (commercial centre).⁶⁵ Alongside the taxes collected in cash and kind (*suai*) and tributes received, foreign trade was the most important source of the king's revenue. The relationship between economic development and politics in Ayutthaya ran 'in an almost circular fashion. The more the king gained wealth through trade, the better able he was to overawe or overcome both domestic and neighbouring rivals and join their territory to his, thereby further improving his ability to trade.'⁶⁶ The case of Ayutthaya demonstrates the cultural role of trade: 'control of commerce as a source of wealth and a pre-requisite to power'.⁶⁷ The king—the greatest merchant of Siam—was keen to acquire strong control over trade in his port, notably by means of royal monopolies and discriminatory trade.⁶⁸ It was precisely these acts which European observers, too willingly and with self-interest afore-thought, ascribed to his 'avarice'.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the scope of the maritime trade of Siam ranged from Arabia to Japan.⁶⁹ The kingdom possessed two major ports: Ayutthaya (and Bangkok) on the Gulf of Siam, with its trade network consisting of the Malay and Indonesian Archipelagos and the South China Sea; and Tenasserim (and Mergui) with its commercial connections in the Bay of Bengal. Export goods were its natural resources, especially forest and marine products, and minerals; foodstuffs and agricultural products, especially rice; and handicrafts.

A special bureaucratic unit directly answerable to the king was created to deal with international trade: the *Phrakhleng Sinkha* (Ministry of External Relations and Maritime Trading Affairs). It was designed primarily to control economic activities—the buying and selling of import and

export produce—from and to both local and foreign traders. Besides this principal function, the minister, known as *Phrakhlung*, and his officials were the designated intermediaries and interpreters for the foreign communities in Ayutthaya. The ministry was divided into four parts: (1) the Department of General Administration, Appeals, and Records; (2) the Department of Royal Warehouses; (3) the Department of Eastern Maritime Affairs and Crown Junks (*Krom Tha Sai*); and (4) the Department of Western Maritime Affairs (*Krom Tha Khwa*). From the 1630s, the Dutch officially fell under the responsibility of the *Krom Tha Sai*. The head of this department—a Chinese resident of Ayutthaya—was responsible for trade in the South and East China Seas (shipping to and from ports in Southern China, Nagasaki, the Ryukyu Islands, and Vietnam) and had jurisdiction over all Chinese and Japanese in the Thai kingdom. The VOC was placed under the responsibility of this department because, from the Thai viewpoint, the Company, with its headquarters in Batavia, was involved in a predominantly Chinese trade route. Usually with a Muslim from South Asia as its head, the *Krom Tha Khwa* was responsible for maritime relations with South Asia; the shipping to Ayutthaya by Muslim traders from the Malay Peninsula; and, geographically overlapping with the Eastern Department, the South-East Asian Archipelago.⁷⁰ Given its need for commercial and other expertise, the Ayutthayan court was inevitably open to foreigners.

Towards the end of the Ayutthaya period, a decrease in the royal trade monopoly and an increase in private trade especially by officials—who increasingly hired Chinese to sail their junks to China—can be observed. Unlike King Prasatthong—who controlled his officials with a firm hand—and King Narai—who more willingly granted commercial freedom to foreigners in his service rather than to local *khunnang*—, the eighteenth-century rulers were forced by their need for support from their officials to share trading profits with them.⁷¹

Source Material and Structure of the Study

Central to my investigation are the VOC-Dutch sources which document the day-to-day developments at the Ayutthayan court as perceived by the Dutch and their reactions to these developments. This work examines mainly two types of sources: the official VOC reports and the travel literature composed by Company men. As much as possible, it emphasizes the direct experience of the observers. The proximity of the writer of the source to the objects or events under observation has been a prime selection criterion. Therefore, some travel accounts, for example those by Abraham Bogaert (1711) and François Valentyn (1724-6), will not play a

central role in my analysis because the knowledge of the Siamese court they present was secondary.⁷² Especially useful is the series of records classified as the *Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren* (*OBP*), letters and papers sent from the Company's trading office in Ayutthaya to Batavia from 1614 to 1765. Unfortunately, many of the *dagregisters* (diaries), which contain the daily reports from Siam, are missing.⁷³ According to the VOC system, its records were usually written by the incumbent *opperhoofd* (the VOC trade director or chief factor) of the place; therefore, it is rare to have two voices at the same time. For this reason, I have to take his opinion as representative of his time.

This monograph is organized according to both chronological criteria, though not exactly by reign, and a thematic order. The structure tries to accommodate what I consider characteristic of the Dutch perceptions of the Ayutthayan court during that particular period, as well as what the available sources offer. For example, the Company records do not have much to tell about the short reign of King Süa (r. 1703-9), nor do they offer any coherent knowledge of the court of the long-reigning King Thaisa, despite the length of his reign. In the latter case, this may be explained by the lack of perceptiveness among the VOC employees in Siam during this period, or by the relative stability of the reign and the state of the fairly uninterrupted Dutch-Siamese relations, which did not require these men to reflect on either their position at or the power relations with the Siamese court.

Emphasizing the plurality of VOC-Dutch perceptions, this study makes a distinction between the situation and negotiating power of the Dutch Company in its relations with the Siamese Crown and those of the VOC employees in Siam. Chapter One, overwhelmingly based on previous research, outlines the relatively equal positions of Company and Court in commerce, politics, and diplomacy. Chapter Two examines the position of the VOC men in Siam, with special attention paid to the question of their legal status within the jurisdiction of the Siamese court.

Chapters Three and Four describe the enthusiastic, but uneasy learning process of the Company men during the reign of King Prasatthong—when the Dutch-Thai relationship was closest—in their attempts: first, to find a 'common language' to share with their Thai hosts, which they found in the 'language of ritual'; and secondly, to understand the political culture and reality of Ayutthaya. The experience and experiments which both sides underwent and made during this period essentially shaped the ways the Dutch and the Siamese were to treat each other in the future.

Chapter Five is a disquisition on the VOC-Siamese relationship during King Narai's reign which was markedly a retreat into a state of 'business-as-usual'. Changes in circumstances, not only at court but also in the

Company policy, forced the Dutch in Siam to find a new strategy to cope with the new developments around the King—especially, the French presence and the political rise of the (in)famous Greek adventurer, Constantine Phaulkon—and to maintain the King's favour, precisely by trying to benefit from his expanding personal interest in interacting with the outside world. In Chapter Six, the Dutch, failing to take advantage of the favoured position they had attained at the inception of King Phetracha's reign, could do no more than attempt to obtain a picture of his inner world of ongoing power struggles, open and more subtle, which completely absorbed his person.

Chapter Seven focuses on the growing sense of disillusionment between the Dutch and the Siamese during the eighteenth century as the possibility of gaining profit from trading with each other diminished. The Dutch also felt the impact of the growing power-sharing at court. In the midst of this disenchantment, each side again had a role to fulfil in the other's international, non-commercial schemes.

CHAPTER ONE

THE COMPANY AND THE COURT

Introduction

On the surface, the Dutch East India Company and the royal court of Ayutthaya obviously represented different concepts of government and values. The court was ruled by a semi-divine, absolute kingship based on hereditary succession. The Company was an overseas empire administered by an appointed Council of the Indies chaired by the Governor-General. Yet, their behaviour and attitudes were similarly shaped by the pursuit of wealth and power. These congruous interests brought the Company and the court into contact and made them comparable in some ways. Both were profit-oriented trade organizations and political-territorial rulers, with a hierarchical bureaucracy and diplomacy to define their internal and external relations.

The descriptions of basic conditions in Siam—geography, economy, politics and society—in the well-known accounts of VOC chief factors Joost Schouten (written in 1636)¹ and Jeremias van Vliet (1638)², and the earlier but less-known report of Cornelis van Nijenrode (1621)³, reveal how much the Dutch had learnt about the kingdom during the first four decades of their contact with the Siamese. Despite the absence of indigenous sources, we may assume that the court of Ayutthaya had also accumulated knowledge about the Dutch. As early as 1608, Siamese envoys visited the Dutch Republic. In 1637, King Prasatthong had concrete questions put to Van Vliet about the sphere of influence and trading capacity of the VOC in Asia, as well as the state of its relations with Asian rulers. Van Vliet's answers were partly sincere in admitting the shortcomings in the Company's commercial and political presence—which was otherwise depicted as ubiquitous—in the areas dominated by the Portuguese and the Spanish. But they were partly meant to impress the Siamese King in saying that the Asian powers, except Mataram and its allies in Java, endeavoured to live in peace with the Dutch.⁴

Clearly, it was primarily the dominant role of the court in the conduct of Ayutthaya's foreign trade, while not overlooking its international trade network, which excited the interest of the VOC. Actually, the zones of commercial operations of both the Dutch and the Siamese had much in common, although the Siamese operated only in the South China Sea and the Bay of Bengal. The Company policy towards Siam remained

throughout rooted in its commercial interest, and did not have a colonialist bias.⁵ Any attempt to conquer Siam or to get deeply involved in local affairs was not worth an investment because the VOC did not consider the kingdom, strategically and commercially, as important as Java and Ceylon, for example. In general, the strategy of 'schenkagie'—the diplomatic approach—ruled its relationship with the King of Siam.⁶ Yet, in commercial contacts with Siam the Company could not escape other obligations—political, military, and socio-cultural—to its rulers, who demanded these in return for commercial concessions granted to the Dutch. The relations between the Dutch Company and the Siamese court can be described as dynamic, based upon continuous attempts to keep a balance of interests, while competing against each other.

Having said this, it should still be borne in mind that the equilibrium of these enduring relations was constantly tested. Apart from its 'act of aggression' in the form of a naval blockade, the VOC repeatedly closed down its trading-posts in Siam: in Ayutthaya in 1622-4, 1629-33, 1663-4, 1706, 1741-7, and, for the last time, in 1765; in Ligor in 1647, 1663-4, 1711-14, 1741-54, and, for good, in 1756.⁷ The temporary closures of the factories reflected the commercial losses of the VOC stemming from both the problems in the Company's intra-Asian trade and the severe difficulties in obtaining access to the marketable goods in Siam experienced by the Dutch.⁸ The commercial conflicts between the Company and the court can be characterized as a 'clash between two monopolistic powers'.⁹ In their attempts to obtain exclusive rights to buy and export certain commodities, the Dutch were trying to impose their own rights against the rule in Siam—that the King owned everything in his realm.¹⁰ The main conflicts between the VOC and the Siamese court also arose from other reasons. Disputes erupted on a fairly regular basis over the payment of the King's debts to the Company, and sometimes over the overlapping spheres of interest or sovereignty in the Malay Archipelago.

Trade Partners

In the seventeenth century, the VOC policies towards Siam were constructed upon the significance of the kingdom in the overall scheme of the Company's intra-Asian trade, in particular its operations in East Asia. The Dutch involvement in Siam was initiated by their interests in making use of its commercial connection with China. However, the Dutch soon discovered the real benefit of Siam: it provided highly desired commodities for the Japanese market. These products were used to barter for Japanese bullion which the VOC needed for the purchase of Chinese silk and Indian textiles. Understandably, it was exactly the changing character

of the Japan trade around the end of the seventeenth century which forced the VOC to redefine its plans in Siam. For the rest of the eighteenth century, the Dutch remained in Siam for a strategic reason rather than for real profit.

In 1604, the VOC employees in Patani, where a factory had been established three years earlier, learnt from the visiting Siamese envoys that they could enter the China trade under the sponsorship of the Ayutthayan court, by sailing with the tributary mission to the Ming Emperor which King Naresuan was preparing. Since the embassy to China did not take place because of the outbreak of the war between the Siamese and the Burmese, complicated by the unexpected death of the King, the Company servants who had been sent to Ayutthaya in the hope of joining the embassy were summoned back to Patani in 1606.¹¹ Despite such a setback, the Dutch quickly realized that Ayutthaya itself was a potential trade partner. In 1608, King Ekathotsarot (r. 1605-10/11) allowed the VOC to establish its first trading-post in Ayutthaya. The coming of the Dutch was welcomed by Ayutthaya, whose economy had begun to revive after a long period of wars with Burma, which had defeated it in 1569.¹² The establishment of factories in the ports along the existing Chinese shipping routes, which included Patani and Ayutthaya, was part of a Dutch strategy to seek access to the markets of China and Japan.¹³

During the 1620s, commercial setbacks forced not only the Dutch but also the English Company to close their posts around the Gulf of Siam, including those in Ayutthaya. However, in the early 1630s, the VOC finally succeeded in establishing a durable commercial link to East Asia, when it obtained permission to trade with Fujian Province in China from Formosa (Taiwan), and the trade embargo in Japan (1628-32) was lifted. Siam now assumed importance as an essential source of goods in demand in Japan, notably deerskins, cow and buffalo hides, and sappanwood. Furthermore, because of the recurrent tension with the Kingdom of Mataram and unreliable harvests in Java, the kingdom was also an important source of rice not only for Batavia but also for other VOC posts in Asia, especially Formosa, Japan, Malacca, and later Ceylon.¹⁴ The VOC predominantly supplied the Siamese court with exotic and luxury items, especially Indian textiles. But it also played an important role in the Siamese economy by importing money, as well as precious metal, silver, and cowries, which were used as currency in the kingdom.¹⁵ All this considered, it can be said that Siam was more important as an export than an import market for the Dutch.

The full return of the VOC to Ayutthaya in 1633 marked the beginning of the period of the commercial expansion and stabilization of its trade with Siam in which the Company tried to obtain exclusive export

rights to important goods—animal skins and tin—and experimented with some other minor commodities.¹⁶ Besides the positive effect of their military assistance to King Prasatthong in 1634, the position of the Dutch in the eyes of the Siamese court had been further enhanced since the promulgation of the *kaikin* (maritime prohibition) edicts by the Shogunate in 1636, which restricted the movements of the Japanese overseas traders based in and outside Japan. King Prasatthong granted the Dutch exclusive rights to buy and export Siamese animal skins in 1634 and 1646—the latter with the right to inspect the ships leaving Ayutthaya for illegal skin exports (but this was revoked in 1653).¹⁷ From the 1640s, tin, especially from Ligor, emerged as another important export article from Siam. In 1671, King Narai extended the VOC the right to export all the tin which remained in Ligor after he had received his annual tribute and had bought his yearly quota. In the following year, Batavia decided to transfer the Ligor office from the administration of the Malacca office to that of Ayutthaya because ‘it became obvious that the power of the [Siamese] King could greatly aid the Company in its trade there’.¹⁸

According to Smith, the ‘relative success’ enjoyed by the VOC in Siam in the seventeenth century in comparison with its Asian competitors was based primarily on its monopoly arrangements with the royal court.¹⁹ But these were not absolutely watertight as in most places in Asia where the VOC introduced the same strategy, its exclusive rights to buy and export animal skins and tin from Siam were often violated, sometimes with the knowledge of the King, his *khunnang*, or the local officials in Ligor. The Company was constantly competing with both foreign and local traders—especially the court members. Above all, it battled with the ‘Moors’—a generic term used for the Muslims from South Asia and Persia—and the Chinese, both of whom in one way or another had the advantage of already being integrated into the Siamese bureaucracy, in particular the *Phrakhlang* Ministry. Two prominent Muslim traders from the Persian Gulf indeed helped re-organize the ministry in the 1610s.²⁰ Around 1640, when the Japanese and Japanese-Thai merchants had to cede their position as a result of the maritime prohibition imposed by the Japanese Government, they were replaced by the Chinese, who saw a great potential in exporting deer- and rayskins to Japan. In 1654, the Dutch tried to protest about the export of hides by the Chinese, and their attempt almost led to a fight between them and the Chinese, who had the support of a Chinese courtier.²¹

The conflict between the VOC and the Ayutthayan court in the early 1660s epitomizes the pressure of competition the Dutch were facing in Siam and the extreme measures they took to protect their interests. Since his enthronement in 1656, King Narai and his officials had been increasingly expanding their commercial activities to East Asia, bypassing the

VOC in the shipping of Thai goods to Nagasaki by using Chinese crews to man their junks. Narai also used Muslims and Europeans to trade on his behalf—an innovation in the nature of royal trade but not a structural change.²² Eyeing the possibility of trade with Formosa, Narai welcomed the envoys sent by the Ming-loyalist general Zheng Chenggong (called Coxinga by the Dutch), who had conquered that island from the VOC in 1662. Just at that time, while Narai was occupied with the war in the north of Siam fighting both Burma and Lansang, Persian and Chinese elements at court took advantage of the absence of the King and prominent officials from Ayutthaya to further their commercial interests and tried to discriminate against the Dutch trading in the kingdom. The Persian official Okya 'Pieschijt', or Abdu'r-Razzaq, and his Chinese accomplices seized upon the unjustified capture of a Siamese crown junk off Hainan by the VOC as an excuse to abrogate the Dutch trading privileges. They also ordered Zheng's Chinese followers in Ayutthaya to surround the Company lodge and threaten to torture the Dutch as the Chinese had done to their compatriots in Formosa.²³ Although driven into a corner, the Dutch managed to find help from prominent officials returning from the war and submit their grievance to King Narai, who immediately tried to rectify the situation by reinstating Dutch privileges and severely punishing Abdu'r-Razzaq.²⁴

In spite of Narai's accommodating attitude, Batavia decided that the accumulated problems between the VOC and the Siamese Crown had to be solved on its terms. This resulted in the withdrawal of the Company personnel from Siam and the naval blockade at the mouth of the Chao Phraya River by the VOC (selectively capturing junks sailing to Siam from China and Japan) between September 1663 and February 1664. The conflict was settled with the signing of the first Dutch-Siamese Treaty of 1664 which favoured the VOC, defining its commercial privileges and the extraterritorial rights of its subjects in Siam.²⁵ Its contents confirmed the Dutch intention to restrain Siamese trade expansion in East Asia. The treaty not only gave the Dutch the freedom to trade with anyone anywhere in Siam, it also reaffirmed their exclusive rights to buy and export deerskins and cow hides. Prudently, it forbade the use of Chinese crews on Siamese ships bound for China and Japan. In return, the Dutch were willing to pay compensation for the goods they had seized from the King's junks between 1661 and 1664. Certainly, King Narai felt the impact of the terms of the treaty. He sent envoys to Batavia to renegotiate it, especially the clause prohibiting the use of Chinese sailors. A few years later, Narai asked the VOC in Ayutthaya 'with intended irony' for advice: what was the most effective way to enforce a blockade in front of the river of Cambodia?²⁶ Importantly, this episode should be seen as a limited conflict with a limited goal, in which the VOC used force as a means to strength-

en its position in the trade between Siam and East Asia. Soon enough, the Dutch realized that their efforts had yielded only meagre success. The trading privileges offered by the treaty were never fully accorded by the Siamese court. It was also impossible for the Dutch to check whether Chinese crews were being used on Siamese Crown junks; another blockade would have cost more than the VOC could earn from Siam.²⁷

The 1680s was another difficult period—not only for the Dutch but also for other foreign traders in Siam—when Narai's Greek favourite Constantine Phaulkon tried to monopolize the foreign trade. As a result of his machinations, the Moor traders were forced to leave the kingdom. The English East India Company (EIC) had also departed, three years before King Narai declared war on it in August 1687; this conflict was actually caused by the misconduct of Englishmen whom the Greek minister had hired for royal service.²⁸ Phaulkon's allies, the French, did not benefit liberally from his trade policy either. Despite their complaints of having suffered from Phaulkon's policy, the Dutch managed to live through this period by holding on to their hide export rights.²⁹

In 1688, Phaulkon's dominance at court was brought to an end by the Palace Revolution led by a prominent official, Phra Phetracha, who subsequently usurped the throne of Ayutthaya after King Narai's death. In need of support from the Dutch for his new dynasty, King Phetracha renewed the Dutch-Siamese Treaty that very year. It did not usher in a new era as the new reign did not bring any improvement in the situation of the Dutch in Siam. Phetracha significantly concentrated his commercial activity in China and Japan, especially during the years of difficulty with the English in South Asia, thereby becoming a competitor of the VOC.³⁰ Violations of Dutch commercial privileges continued. The Dutch and the Siamese now increasingly accused each other of pricing goods arbitrarily and quarrelled over the court's debts.

International developments also contributed to making the trade with Siam less profitable for the VOC. During the 1680s and 1690s, Siamese shipping was partly disturbed by the political unrest in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, and by the circumstances in India which included a state of war between Ayutthaya and the EIC, the fighting between the French and the Dutch in Coromandel, and the withdrawal from trade of the Mughal officials.³¹ An even more fundamental change in the VOC-Siam trade was caused by the break with the existing pattern of the Company's triangular trade between Siam, Japan, and India, as a result of the decision of the Shogunate to restrict the Dutch export of bullion out of the country. The ban on silver exports in 1668 was followed by the depreciation in the value of gold in 1695, and limitations on copper exports in the 1710s. It was just at that time that it became increasingly difficult for the Dutch to sell products in Japan because its Government

was trying to protect and promote its own craftsmanship. In 1715, the number of VOC ships allowed to enter Japan was limited to only two per year; consequently, after that year the Dutch stopped buying and exporting Siamese hides.³²

Sappanwood and tin now became the most important Siamese goods for the VOC, but they were no match for animal skins in terms of profitability. A little later, the oversupply of tin and, especially, of sappanwood in the 1720s and 1730s forced the Company to adjust its policy on Siam again. The Dutch-Siamese Treaty of 1709 had set out that the Ayutthayan court would pay its debts to the VOC in three equal parts of cash, tin, and sappanwood. The Dutch now demanded that the court pay its debts more in cash or other products than in sappanwood.³³ The disappointment was reciprocal as the VOC itself did not live up to the court's expectations in many ways. Seeing no chance of making a profit, it avoided delivering goods, especially Indian textiles and silver altogether, or did not deliver them in an adequate quantity or at the price preferred by the court. During the 1730s, the tensions between the VOC and the Siamese court rose so high that the former considered closing down its trading posts in Siam a few times, before actually doing so between 1741 and 1747.

During the eighteenth century, the VOC made several evaluations in an endeavour to ascertain the state of its trade in Siam. Admittedly, these assessments showed that trade with Siam was no longer cost-effective, perhaps even detrimental to the Company. The most important export goods of the kingdom, such as tin and sappanwood, could now be procured elsewhere and at lower prices. Soon, the proceeds could no longer cover the expense of keeping up the office in Ayutthaya. Furthermore, the Siamese court proved to be an unreliable supplier of rice. If the Dutch decided to remain in Siam, they did so because they still hoped for future gains and did not want to cede their place to other European rivals and forfeit the commercial privileges they had won with difficulty in the past.³⁴ For instance, in 1731, *Opperhoofd* Rogier van Alderwereld (1722-3, 1728-31) argued against the suggestion of Batavia to close the offices in Siam and instead to send only one or two ships a year to Ayutthaya. He pointed out that the English who had broken up their factory in the 1680s and had operated ever since as private traders from Bengal and Madras, without tax exemptions and a fixed price agreement, constantly incurred losses selling Indian textiles to the court.³⁵

Even with its trade privileges, the VOC could barely compete with the more flexible Asian merchants or the European free traders who could operate with lower profit margins. From the last decade of the seventeenth century, the Company's position in Siam was further aggravated by the rise of the Chinese traders. After the Qing Government had finally

overcome all opposition, including that of the followers of Zheng Chenggong in 1683, it lifted the *hai-jin* (maritime prohibition) in 1684, thereby liberalizing the overseas junk trade of Guangdong and Fujian to South-East Asia. Chinese private traders increasingly called at or settled in Siam.³⁶ Chinese men had been serving in the Siamese administration for a long time, but it was for the first time in the 1720s that a Chinese achieved the prominent position of *Phrakhlang*.³⁷ The mounting activities of the Chinese merchants in the first decades of the eighteenth century 'reduced the Siamese consciousness of dependence on the Dutch trading link, and made them [the Siamese] less compliant in observing the [Dutch-Siamese] contracts'.³⁸ The Siamese court apparently preferred trading with the Chinese who paid a higher price than the Dutch and, unlike the VOC, were not exempted from import and export duties. Despite their apparently favoured position, when the Dutch were suffering from the discriminatory trade practices of the Ayutthayan court during the 1730s, such as higher taxation of imports and exports and strict state control, the Chinese merchants also had difficulty in trading in Siam.³⁹

After 1688, the Dutch no longer regarded the French as significant rivals; indeed, the latter never succeeded in fully reinserting themselves in the trade with Siam. The Thai kingdom did not offer any merchandise the French really desired, and the Ayutthayan court refused to entertain the idea of having a French factory in its land again.⁴⁰ It was the growth of English trade in the Indian Ocean to which the Dutch paid most attention.

The great demand for Indian textiles at the eighteenth-century Siamese court continued and these were sought from different trading partners: the VOC, the Indian Muslim traders, and the India-based English merchants. John Anderson has asserted that the EIC never managed to return to Siam because, between 1690 and 1759, the kingdom was rife with conflicts which ruined trade and exacerbated impoverishment.⁴¹ English private traders did actually return to trade there, as already mentioned, and some of them even tried to mediate between the English Governors in India and the Siamese authorities. The Dutch reported that King Sūa had tried to contact the English in Madras as early as 1706, presumably shortly after the VOC's temporary withdrawal. But the English were not to be wooed because the King did not concede to their demands, which included compensation for their losses suffered during King Narai's reign.⁴² Finally, in 1762, the Governor of Madras sent a letter to ask for permission to establish a factory in Mergui, with a promise to deliver linen to the court at the same price as the VOC did. Having little faith in the enterprising spirit of the Siamese, the Dutch trusted that the court would maintain its long-term connection with the VOC and would not be too

keen on entering into any new arrangement. Only should the VOC withdraw from Siam and stop importing textiles would the Siamese be forced to negotiate with the English. The Dutch were well aware of the advantage the English would have over them if the latter were to operate from Mergui. Crossing directly over to Mergui from Coromandel and Bengal, unlike the VOC which had to go via Batavia to procure textiles in India, the English would incur much less cost. Even if the Siamese court tried to lower the price of textiles, the English would still make a profit. Mergui had plenty of additional advantages: the proximity of tin mines and sapanwood forests, as well as better access to elephants and elephants' teeth. Lastly, the port town was far away from the draconian supervision of the court and would allow the English to operate more freely than could the Dutch who, in the capital city, had no option but to deal with many officials.⁴³

Around 1750, for one last time the VOC tried to revive its Siam trade in order to buy tin which was much needed for its burgeoning tea export from Canton. In addition, coincidentally, the Siamese court made a conciliatory gesture by concluding another treaty with the Dutch in 1754—the first since 1709—which gave them the exclusive right to export Ligor tin in return for aiding the King's horse-buyers in Java and the supply of textiles and luxury goods at a price set by the court.⁴⁴ Once again, the Dutch faced the same old problem: Siamese goods, tin in this case, were too expensive. This eventually led to the closure of the establishment in Ligor in 1756.⁴⁵

After the 'demise' of the tin trade, the Company concentrated on sapanwood, elephants' teeth, and ducats; it tried to negotiate with the court for lower pricing of the first two and a more profitable exchange rate of the money. This time, in the aftermath of the Burmese invasion of 1760, the Siamese court was not so conciliatory and resolved to deny all the Dutch requests, in order to compensate for the losses caused by the war.⁴⁶ Even before the second Burmese invasion, which began in 1764 and reached Ayutthaya in 1765, the decline in trade forced the VOC to decide to leave Siam.⁴⁷

Political Allies

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, Siam had long become one of the most powerful polities in mainland South-East Asia, with a considerable number of vassal states. Supported by its military prowess and navigational technology, abetted by its skills in organization, the VOC swiftly grew strong, politically and territorially, in the Malay Archipelago and had to be counted as a power in the region. No wonder that these two

powers sought a political alliance in the face of intra-regional politics including problems in lord-vassal relations. European rivalry also formed part of the equation.

Apart from their significance as trade partners, Europeans were often considered a power factor in the political strategy of the Siamese rulers, who were well aware of Western naval and military capacities and were not uninformed about the rivalry among the European nations. In the first two decades of the seventeenth century, the Siamese court hoped to use the Dutch to counterbalance Portuguese power. The growing influence of the Portuguese in the region between their strongholds in Syriam and Malacca troubled Ayutthaya when it was trying to re-open its trade route to the Bay of Bengal via Tenasserim, which it had won back from Burma in 1593. The Siamese King not only repudiated Goa's demand to exclude the Dutch from trading in Siam but, hoping to place an ally in what was the sphere of interest of both the Portuguese and the Burmese, even offered Mergui and Tenasserim to the Dutch in 1610 and 1616. The Dutch did not want to be involved in this and rejected both offers.⁴⁸

Soon, the Ayutthayan court found another use for the Dutch. In his missive to the Prince of Orange in 1622, King Songtham (r. 1610/1-28) asked for assistance as he prepared an expedition against King Chettha II of Cambodia, who had recently renounced his status of vassal of Siam.⁴⁹ Since his belligerent intentions failed to eventuate, the Dutch were spared having to make a difficult decision. The military capacity of Siam had hardly impressed them from the beginning. Van Nijenrode—the earliest VOC observer of Siamese military strength—saw no dearth of weaponry, but a lack of martial valour among the soldiers.⁵⁰ Fifteen years later, Schouten, however, noted that the Siamese armies were poorly armed with only 'Bows and Arrows, Shields, Swords, Pikes and a few Guns', and were ignorant about how to use the goodly quantity of cannons they possessed. He considered the Siamese naval force no match for the Europeans. Schouten's views were echoed in Van Vliet's account.⁵¹ Naturally, the fact that the Siamese King did not seem to enjoy any success in the wars against his rebellious vassals and even needed Dutch assistance to suppress them revealed the limits of his power and confirmed the Dutch impression. By mid-century, the VOC no longer perceived Ayutthaya as a major military power. Still, the Thai kingdom was a dominant political centre in the region: however often Cambodia and its vassals in the Malay Peninsula might rebel, they eventually always returned to submission to it. If the Dutch wanted to trade with these satellites, they still had to reckon with the favour of the King of Siam.⁵²

King Songtham had tried to maintain good relations with both the Iberians and the Dutch. But this changed in 1624, when Spaniards seized the VOC ship *Cleen Zeelandt* in the Chao Phraya River. This act, which

violated the King's sovereignty, compelled him to take sides with the Dutch and force the Spaniards to release the Company vessel. This incident and the following failed act of revenge by the Spaniards in 1628 significantly changed the scheme of foreign alliance of Siam; they led to the fall of the Iberians and the rise to prominence of the Dutch in the eyes of the King. Although the Portuguese were not responsible for the Spanish acts of hostility in Ayutthaya, their position there was undermined because of the political union between Portugal and Spain. The Siamese now perceived both the Spanish and the Portuguese as a threat and consequently chased away or imprisoned the subjects of both nations. With the English absent and the French not yet arrived, the Dutch were now the sole European ally of the Siamese King.⁵³

The return of the VOC to Ayutthaya in 1633 also marked the beginning of its involvement in Siamese politics, or more precisely in the lord-vassal conflicts of Siam. The usurpation of King Prasatthong in 1629 gave the vassal states in the Malay Peninsula, especially Patani which also allied itself with Portuguese Malacca, a reason to repudiate his legitimacy. In 1634, Batavia finally decided to grant Prasatthong's wishes and send some armed ships to assist Siamese troops before Patani. It certainly hoped to enhance the prospect of profit from Siamese goods in its re-surgent Japan trade, but also to stop the war which was disrupting Company business in the affected region, besides containing the Portuguese influence there. Although the VOC's assistance did not really contribute to the eventual resubmission of Patani to Ayutthaya, King Prasatthong amply rewarded the Dutch for their willingness to help with such concessions as an exclusive right to export animal hides. He later offered to help the Company take revenge on the Cambodian King for the massacre of its men there in 1644.⁵⁴ After this period, the VOC only reluctantly assisted King Prasatthong; for instance, in 1647 and 1649, it sent a ship and some employees to help his forces to suppress rebellious Songkhla.⁵⁵

Admittedly, caution has to be exercised in saying that the Kings of Ayutthaya used European nations to counterbalance each other, which would attribute too much importance to European influence. Yet, the evidence tends to suggest that the Siamese rulers, from Ekathotsarot to Narai, did so. By 1636, King Prasatthong had effectively consolidated his power by making peace with his vassals and eliminating almost all of Songtham's heirs. As the King became less dependent on Dutch assistance, he may also have become more concerned about the growing power of the VOC, especially in the south, and about its increasing demands for more concessions from him. Whatever the reason, Prasatthong hastened to reconcile himself with the Portuguese and the Spanish.⁵⁶ However, trade between Ayutthaya and both Macao and Manila did not flourish, and the Portuguese even lost Malacca to the

Dutch in 1641. Therefore, the Dutch were able to maintain their position as the major foreign ally of the Siamese King for a few more decades.

By 1652-3, the VOC had developed a policy of disengagement from Siamese politics, which significantly redefined its position in the kingdom for the rest of its presence there. Initially, the disengagement meant that the Company avoided giving Ayutthaya any help in disciplining its vassals. The employees in Siam were strictly instructed not to become involved with internal struggles, especially the recurrent conflicts of succession. They obviously took heed as they refused to aid Phra Narai in 1656 and Phra Phetracha in 1688 in their efforts to secure the throne, and remained neutral throughout these crises.

Politically, naval capacity was the most important grounds for the negotiation power between the VOC and the Ayutthayan court. Since it was impossible to refuse to help at all, from the early 1650s, the Dutch limited their assistance to aid only at a technical level and lent no more warships.⁵⁷ There were two major considerations which prompted this decision. The Company considered the profits from the Siam trade no longer worth extra investments, politically or militarily, especially when its resources were overstretched as a result of military engagements elsewhere in Asia.⁵⁸ It also had firm intentions to contain the naval ambitions of Siam. In 1650, on the advice of its Commissioner to Siam, Rijckloff van Goens, 'not to be too liberal in this regard in order not to damage ourselves', Batavia decided to refuse King Prasatthong access to Dutch ship's tackle and pilots.⁵⁹ The Company ultimately used its naval superiority to force some concessions from King Narai in 1663-4.

The impact of the European presence in Asia before the nineteenth century may sometimes be overestimated, but it has to be admitted that Europeans had indubitably enforced control over Asian waters which changed the nature of indigenous freedom of navigation. VOC control of sea routes in many parts of Asia made the Ayutthayan court dependent on its co-operation. Siam often needed the Company's means of transport to connect it to the outside world, and if not the vessels themselves at least its concession to allow passage to certain regions. The instructions drawn up in 1685 by Aarnout Faa (1678-85) reveal how much control the Dutch had (or believed themselves to have) over Siamese shipping outside its own territory. The *Opperhoofd* instructed his successor to grant a pass to the Siamese King to enter the following places: the north of Manila, Cambodia, Cochin China, Tonkin, Canton, Japan, Pahang, Riau, Johor, Malacca, Coromandel, Bengal, Surat, and Persia. The King's ships to West Java had to call at Batavia and were not allowed to take in textiles and opium to sell there. Significantly, the Company barred him passage from Coxinga's Formosa, as well as from Indragiri, Jambi, and Palembang, with which the Dutch were the sole trade partner by treaty.⁶⁰

As is evident in this instruction, it was not surprising that, during the last decade of King Narai's reign, Ayutthaya and Batavia were embroiled in several conflicts of interest in the Malay Archipelago. The VOC vehemently protested to Narai when Jambi sent him pepper as a tributary gift in 1682. While Jambi was one of the traditional vassal states of the Siamese King, it also had given a pepper monopoly contract to the Dutch. The Dutch complained again when Narai again overstepped the mark and sent his ships to Aceh through Malaccan waters without informing them, who held the right by conquest over Malacca. Narai in turn grumbled about the harassment of the subjects of Johor—also considered his vassal—by the Company.⁶¹ These disputes and the Dutch conquest of Banten in 1682—which demonstrated the rising power of the VOC in the region—may have convinced King Narai of the Dutch threat to Siam and compelled him to seek a new ally in the French.⁶²

After 1688, the VOC lost its original usefulness as a political ally—both internal and external—in the eyes of the Siamese court, and its potential antagonism had become visible even earlier. The negative experience with the French involvement in the internal affairs of Ayutthaya during King Narai's reign did not make the following generations of Siamese rulers anti-European, but it did make them wary of what European involvement might lead to. The Kings of the Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty no longer appointed any European in an administrative capacity. Nor did they ask the VOC for any assistance in suppressing outbursts of internal unrest.

Diplomatic Counterparts

Since the Siamese King presented himself as the semi-divine ruler of his realm, to interact with him, even with a purely commercial motivation, required a ritual of alliance which visualized relations in a way designed to highlight the King's elevated status. The Europeans used these main diplomatic instruments to define formal relations between them and the Asians: contracts and, to a greater extent, visiting embassies. In Siam, the Portuguese from Malacca were the first to introduce the signing of a treaty in 1518. Under its terms, the Portuguese were allowed to settle and trade in the kingdom, enjoying commercial privileges and religious freedom; in return they supplied the Siamese King with armaments and allowed the Siamese to trade in Malacca. While Europeans perceived a contract as a guarantee of their interests and a justification of defence of those interests, how seriously the Thai observed the agreements in the treaty was obviously questionable. When the Siamese court agreed to conclude its first treaty with the Dutch in 1664, it wanted to revive a good relationship with the

Dutch rather than to observe fully the agreements which put Siam at a disadvantage. That the court continued concluding or renewing contracts with the European nations and companies reflects that it, too, had accepted the treaty as a convention by which to define its relationship with the Europeans.

Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the Europeans and Asians, and in our case study the VOC and the Siamese court, normally had two elements in diplomacy in common: the idea of the hierarchy of states and the practice of sending and receiving embassies. There were shades in emphasis. Especially in the Asian context, hierarchy played a more important role in diplomatic practice than it did in Europe where the reciprocation of embassies and permanent representatives gradually became a norm. As Van Goor asserts, whereas the great states of Asia, especially China, Persia, and Mughal India, considered themselves central—each in its own world order—and regarded sending an embassy as a sign of subordination, the South-East Asian polities were more willing to send embassies for practical reasons.⁶³ The court of Ayutthaya itself maintained a hierarchical order of the polities with which it had contact, and would treat a visiting embassy according to the status of the ruler who sent it. While Ayutthaya had embraced the ideas of kingship originating from India which emphasized the centrality of its ruler in society, it was always part of the China-centric diplomatic tradition. Clearly, the Siamese Kings were aware that ‘they inhabited a pluralistic world’.⁶⁴ As Burma, Vietnam, Ryukyu and Korea did, it sent tributary embassies to the Emperor of China and, in so doing, benefited from the imperial gifts which outweighed its own tribute, and from the permission to trade there.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Ayutthaya entertained ‘relatively equal’, that is non-tributary, contacts with such states as Burma, Japan, Persia, Mataram, some Indian polities, and European nations. Lastly, its king received tribute from his vassal states, such as Cambodia and some sultanates in the Malay Peninsula.⁶⁶ This differentiation in relationships reflects how Siam perceived its own place in its world order.⁶⁷

An embassy usually consisted of three essential elements: the missive, the envoy, and the tribute or gift. For the Thai, the missive was the most important because it was regarded as the mouthpiece of the ruler who sent it. Consequently, the capacity of the Ayutthayan envoy was limited because he was merely the messenger of the king. Despite the general emphasis on its envoy’s power to negotiate, Batavia fully recognized how important the missives were to the Siamese. Gift-giving—originally seen as complementing the relations—developed a new function: to serve to balance the trade profit between the Company and the Crown.⁶⁸

The Dutch Republic was the first country in Europe to receive a Thai embassy. In 1608, King Ekathotsarot decided to send his envoys there to

test the Portuguese accusation that the Dutch had no country. This shows how the Ayutthayan court created its world order: it fathomed the power of a potential ally by empirical experience. The Dutch were immediately compelled to understand the politics of the region. The VOC administrators had initially refused to transport the Siamese embassy to Europe, fearing the high costs. However, their representative in Ayutthaya, Cornelis Specx, argued that, to avoid offending the King of Siam, the Dutch had to receive his ambassadors as well as they had the envoys of the Sultans of Johor and Aceh, whom the Siamese King considered 'inferior' to him.⁶⁹ Since the Dutch had transported an embassy from Aceh to the Netherlands in 1604, they could not refuse to accord the Siamese King at least the same honour. When they first appeared in the region, the Dutch had the urge to 'puncture Iberian pretensions to universal authority' and in order to do so resorted to taking South-East Asian representatives to witness the achievements of their home country.⁷⁰

Apart from presenting Ekathotsarot's missive to the Dutch Stadholder, Prince Maurice, the Siamese envoys had the opportunity to observe some major Dutch cities and ports, including a few operational bases of the VOC, like Amsterdam, Hoorn, and Enkhuizen. The Dutch also tried to impress their guests with a demonstration in The Hague of a recent invention, the telescope, through which the Siamese saw the towers of Delft and Leiden. We may assume that the information, which these envoys related to their ruler and other court members upon their return home in 1610, played a vital role in forming the impressions of the Siamese about the Dutch and the Netherlands, especially in terms of material development. This knowledge must have helped dispel any doubts about the Dutch potential to counterbalance Portuguese power in South-East Asia.⁷¹ But, since this embassy marked the beginning of the exchange of letters and gifts between the King of Siam and the Prince of Orange, it also created (or reinforced) a perception which was to determine the treatment of Dutch diplomatic representatives by Siam.

At the beginning of their presence in Asia, Dutch traders, even before the VOC period, often used the institution of the Stadholder, usually associated with the Prince of Orange, who was 'appointed' to hold the office for the Provinces of Holland, Zeeland, and Utrecht by their Parliaments,⁷² to create a diplomatic standing for themselves suitable to the local protocol and so help introduce themselves as representatives of a prince equal in status to the indigenous rulers. In his diplomatic order, the King of Siam recognized only the Stadholder, or, in Siamese understanding, the 'King of Holland', as his equal and perceived the Governor-General as a 'servant' of the Prince. Maurice, Prince of Orange, who held the Stadholder's office between 1585 and 1625, was interested in what Asia had to offer both to the Republic and to himself. He gave letters of

recommendation and gifts to the commanders of the first Dutch ships sailing for the Malay Archipelago in 1595, to be used to initiate contacts with the local rulers. During the first fifty years of the Company's existence, the trade agreements and contracts of alliance with Asian rulers, especially in the Malay Archipelago, were concluded by the representatives of the VOC also in the name of the States General and the Prince of Orange. As time passed, the Company gradually gained so much confidence from its political and military power that its need for the Stadholder as an intermediary between itself and the Asian rulers steadily waned. The direct correspondence between the House of Orange and the Asian rulers finally came to an end with the First Stadholder-less Period between 1650 and 1672.⁷³ In the case of Siam, it had ended even earlier, as we shall see in Chapter Three.

From a comparison of the receptions of the Persian and French embassies by King Narai during the 1680s—the zenith of Ayutthayan diplomacy—with the treatment the Dutch received from his court, Van Goor draws the conclusion that the status of the Dutch in the Siamese diplomatic hierarchy was inferior to that of Persia and France.⁷⁴ The slide towards this 'demoted' position had begun in the second half of King Prasatthong's reign for two main reasons. First, as already indicated, the VOC lost royal favour since it had become more insistent in pressing for commercial privileges and, at the same time, less willing to assist the King in solving his political troubles. Secondly, after the Company had replaced the authority of the Prince of Orange with that of the Governor-General in diplomatic procedures from the beginning of the 1640s, the subsequent lack of a 'royal mandate' for diplomatic representatives explains why the Dutch were treated with less honour than their Persian and French counterparts who represented their kings—the equals of the King of Siam. Admittedly, the Siamese held the commercial and military power of the Dutch in awe; King Narai, for instance, sent an embassy to Batavia to defuse the tension between his court and the Company in 1686—a proof of the pragmatism of Siamese diplomacy. Nevertheless, the Governor-General was never formally recognized as the equal of the Siamese King and the VOC was never considered a princely body. The emphasis on the status of the authority which sent the embassy was not exclusively a Siamese feature. In the first half of the seventeenth century, the position of the Dutch Republic in European diplomatic hierarchy, as seen in the ceremonial treatment its representatives received, in no way matched its real commercial, financial, and military power because the Stadholder was not a monarch in the normal sense.⁷⁵

Despite diplomatic disadvantages, it was the Dutch who survived the difficult period of Phaulkon's dominance and the political turmoil following King Narai's death, and even became the most important foreign ally

of his immediate successor, Phetracha. As Van Goor points out, although the diplomatic status of the Dutch had been lowered, their constant presence in Siam strengthened their ability to adjust to circumstances.⁷⁶ In a sense, the VOC trading post functioned as a permanent diplomatic representation, which was one distinctive feature of the emerging modern diplomacy. The Company men stationed in different parts of Asia not only traded but also, in a similar fashion to the present-day diplomats, gathered information about local developments for their own use as well as to aid the decision making by their superiors.

In Dutch-Siamese diplomatic relations, although 'equality' was ambiguous, 'reciprocity' reigned supreme. After the correspondence between the Siamese King and the Prince of Orange had been stopped around 1640, Ayutthaya and Batavia continued exchanging letters and gifts between the King through his *Phrakhleng* and the Governor-General. It must be emphasized that, despite some troublesome phases which will be addressed in the following chapters, the exchange of letters and gifts between Siam and the VOC took place more regularly—virtually on a yearly basis—than between Siam and any of its other diplomatic counterparts.

It should be borne in mind that the cultivation of good relations between the Government in Batavia and the Siamese court was based not only on the outward and visible signs of diplomacy by adhering to protocol, but also took the more concrete shape of giving assistance and service. Batavia maintained its standing in the eyes of the Ayutthayan court as an indispensable supplier of foreign material culture, knowledge, and service. The Dutch figured importantly in introducing such Western technology as modern weapons, ship-building, and navigation. Unintentionally, they served as cultural broker between Siam and the outside world. Every now and then, Ayutthaya tried to make use of Dutch influence and resources. Its court sometimes asked Batavia to lend necessary assistance to the King's factors sent overseas and a few times it requested naval protection for its vessels sailing the waters beyond its territorial reach.⁷⁷ On one occasion, in 1730, after the 'vermillion-seal'—official licences to enter Japan—had been stolen twice by the Chinese captains it had hired, the Siamese court had to ask the Dutch to confirm the status of the Crown junks sent there to the Japanese authorities.⁷⁸ On another occasion, in 1737/8, Ayutthaya asked Batavia to restrain the Governor of Malacca from selling food and ammunition to the Buginese who had aided Kedah in attacking Tenasserim and abducting its people.⁷⁹ Whenever necessary, the Siamese court did reciprocate. In 1715, for instance, King Thaisa wrote to the ruler of Cochin China to secure the release of the VOC men who had survived a shipwreck there.⁸⁰

Conclusion

The relationship between the Dutch Company and the Siamese court can be characterized by the juxtaposition of co-operation and competition. Both parties were in a constant search of a *modus vivendi*. This reflects how much their interests had in common. Admittedly, Dutch-Siamese relations had been initiated by commercial motivation, and profit always played a very important role in determining the level of persuasion and negotiating power of both sides. But it would be misleading to take commercial profit as the sole decisive factor.

The Siamese court needed Batavia—its naval and commercial capacity, political influence, and resources—for accessing the international trade network and for benefiting from the developments of the outside world. Considering that the military power of Siam, especially its naval force, may not have been, or was not, equal to that of the VOC, it does not appear to have been a tie between equals. Yet, Siam certainly had other strengths to be brought to bear to persuade the Dutch to reach a deal. In the seventeenth century, the Dutch Company had to rely on the co-operation of Ayutthaya in its attempt to expand its trade and so strengthen its position in Asia. In the following century, despite the loss of profit there, it still remained in Siam with the hope of stabilizing its position, which was being seriously challenged all over the East. In short, the Company and the Crown owed the power to negotiate with each other to their position in the broader world.

CHAPTER TWO

THE COMPANY MEN AND SETTLEMENT IN SIAM

Introduction

Although the VOC dealt with the court of Ayutthaya with the confidence born of its commercial, military, and political strength, its employees in Siam had a different negotiating power in relation to that court, for they were not only bound to the guidelines and regulations of their superiors in Asia and Europe,¹ but also obliged to obey Siamese rules. As far as the daily contacts were concerned, it was these men-on-the-spot who played a crucial role in intermediating between the two powers of relatively equal position and different cultures. While the policies made in Batavia or the Dutch Republic—which, though relying much on information provided by the VOC representatives in Siam, did not always take account of their opinions—could have a positive or negative impact on the life of the men-on-the-spot, their own behaviour, too, was responsible for the fate of the Dutch community as well as the success or failure of Company business in the Thai kingdom. Being at the forefront of these cross-cultural interactions and caught in-between the two authorities, the VOC men created their own particular experience and attained a position in relation to the Siamese court in a way which was perforce different from that of their superiors who administered from faraway Batavia.

Bearing in mind the existing yet limited freedom of movement of the foreign population bound by Siamese regulations, the presence of the Dutch in Siam must be explained in connection with the two main locations around which they preponderantly operated: the court—which included the residences not only of the King but also of the other *chao* and the *khunnang*—and the Company's own lodge. First and foremost, following the monopolistic trading system of the Siamese Government, the VOC employees were required to maintain direct contacts with the King and his court members. When engaged with the Siamese elite, the Dutch merchants fittingly assumed the roles of diplomatic representatives of the VOC and the Dutch Republic. For the sake of formality, the VOC *Opperhoofd* commenced his term of office armed with a written accreditation from the High Government in Batavia, and he would usually be granted a welcome and a farewell audience by the King, or the *Phrakhlang*. He would expect to be integrated into Siamese administrative hierarchy: a court rank and title, together with insignia, which he was

obliged to carry with him when presenting himself at court, would be conferred on him.² Above all, most of the daily activities of the Dutch centred on the Company lodge where they pursued their business transactions and carried on their day-to-day life through interactions with the officials, local people, and other foreign communities. For this reason, it was not only the planned commercial interest and political design, but also the daily practice and improvised adaptation which constituted the Company servants' experiences and perceptions of Siam.

The presence of the VOC employees in Siam posed questions to both the Siamese authorities—as to how to deal with them—and the men themselves—as to how to negotiate between the two different cultural and legal traditions. In this chapter we shall focus on the life of the Company men at their lodge, especially in treading the thorny path of legal questions concerning the status of the VOC employees and the Company settlement in Siamese law and social organization. The study of their legal status—which, as in some case studies in this chapter, appeared merely theoretical and not actual—was not only an indication of the power relations between the VOC and the Siamese court, but also reflects some of the Dutch perceptions of their host society.

The most important primary documents for the pre-modern legal history of Thailand, the *Kotmai Tra Sam Duang* (The Three Seals Laws) do not offer substantial information on laws pertaining to foreigners in Ayutthaya.³ Consequently, the following reconstruction of the Dutch legal status in Siam is based overwhelmingly on Dutch records, especially on two documents. The first document, the Dutch-Siamese Treaty of 1664, not only clarified the commercial privileges of the VOC, but also established a clear legal protection, the 'extraterritorial rights', for the Dutch and European employees of the Company in Siam.⁴ The second document, the *Memorie van Overgave* (Instructions for His Successor) of 1720 composed by *Opperhoofd* Wijbrand Blom, gives exceptional information about how the Dutch managed and protected their settlement in practice.⁵

Dutch Attitudes to Siamese Law

As a rule, the VOC employees tried to acquire a basic knowledge of local law to help them, hopefully, make the right decisions. Without an attempt to make a systematic comparison between the Siamese legal traditions and those of the VOC, a glimpse at the attitudes of the Dutch towards Siamese law and law enforcement will certainly help improve our understanding of their actions and responses.

First of all, while the Dutch were aware that Siam had well-established

laws and a judicial system,⁶ the arbitrary dispensation of justice by one person, namely the King, was evidently incompatible with the ideas of the citizens of the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries where jurisdiction was based on a written legal corpus. In their experience, the King of Siam could punish even the most prominent officials, such as the *Phrakhlang*, in an inhuman way at any time. Furthermore, the Dutch were clearly disturbed by the lack of guarantee of the rights of the individual, especially to private property. In many cases, the Dutch saw the King confiscate everything in the possession of officials (who were suspected of wrongdoing), or appropriate the property of his deceased servants, which sometimes left their relatives with practically nothing.⁷ Aware of this practice, the VOC men were very anxious about lending Siamese officials anything because, if the debtor happened to die, his property reverted to the Crown and the Company would have to forgo payment of the debt, too. For example, in 1652, the Dutch decided to accept *namrak* (black liquid lacquer)—not really a commodity in high demand—as the debt payment of the Chinese courtier Okkhun Phisut, who was going to accompany King Prasatthong's brother to Phitsanulok, explicitly because they were afraid that he might die on the way and they would lose the loan they had given him.⁸

Secondly, the Dutch were terrified (and sometimes almost morbidly fascinated) by the sadistic methods of physical punishment and trials by ordeal commonly practised in Siam. In his 'Description of Siam', Schouten drew the attention of his superiors and other readers to the judicial process of the country, especially the customs of punishment and ordeal: 'Cashiering, banishments into Desart [deserted places], slavery, confiscations, mutilation of hand or foot, burning in oyl, quartering, and other severe executions ... by ducking under water, holding their hands in boyling oyl, to go bare-foot upon hot coales, or to eat a mess of charmed rice.'⁹ Throughout their presence in Siam, the Dutch witnessed and documented the cruel treatments of those men, women, and children who had fallen victim to Ayutthaya political intrigues. Despite their aversion, this did not mean that the Europeans were unfamiliar with using legal violence against their own and other peoples. In particular cases, the Dutch also used torture to force a confession.

Lastly, the VOC records often indicate that the Dutch considered the judicial system of Siam unreliable because they believed that the Siamese were almost ubiquitously corrupt. Van Vliet expressively voiced his frustration with the 'injustice' of the Siamese legal process in his account of Siam, claiming that the rich and the powerful always won in practice, while the poor always suffered. Nicholas Gervaise, the French priest who lived in Ayutthaya between 1683 and 1686, would have agreed with the Dutch, for he wrote: '[If] the integrity of the ministers of justice matched

the wisdom of the laws that have been established in the kingdom of Siam, there would be no more civilized state in all the Indies. But the inordinate passion for amassing wealth, which is the dominant vice of the country, renders these laws for ever ineffective.¹⁰ Again, the complaints about the 'corrupt' Siamese officials did not stop the Dutch from making use of their veniality in order to extricate themselves from their own troubles.

Despite many differences between the legal code of the Company (known as the *Statutes of Batavia*, which was a projection of Dutch law on its territories and subjects in Asia¹¹) and that of Siam (observed from the *Kotmai Tra Sam Duang*¹²), there were a few commonalities in their legal principles. Both the Ayutthayan court and the VOC were law-promulgating bodies, imposing law on their subjects in the public as well as private spheres. While Siamese law treated persons according to their different social status, that is different *sakdi na*, the *Statutes of Batavia* differentiated between persons, or more precisely ethnicities. An Asian convict was generally punished more severely than his European counterpart for the same crime. Besides this, both the Siamese authorities and the High Government in Batavia allowed the multi-ethnic societies in the territories under their jurisdiction to exercise legal plurality, that is, they gave limited administrative and judicial autonomy to other ethnic groups.¹³

Extraterritoriality: The VOC Men and Siamese Jurisdiction

Not only were the general attitudes of the Dutch towards the legal and judicial practices in Siam negative, it was their experiences of being under threat from the Siamese authorities which compelled the Company servants to seek immunity from the local jurisdiction. Especially during the first decade of King Prasatthong's reign, the Siamese court used not only the lure of splendour but also physical threats to force the Dutch to make concessions. In 1634, when the VOC was reluctant to give Prasatthong the assistance demanded for his troops in his attempts to suppress Patani, its employees in Ayutthaya were forbidden to leave their lodge. Only after Schouten, who had led the Company's armed ships to Patani, had managed to prove that his superiors had indeed rendered military assistance to the Siamese troops, were the Dutch allowed to return to business. Similarly in 1640, the King's dissatisfaction with the Dutch, fuelled by further accusations brought by their enemies at court, led to another siege of the VOC lodge and a threat to have the Dutch trampled to death by elephants. The Dutch were reportedly saved by the intercession of friends at court.¹⁴

The decisive turning-point for the future legal status of the Dutch in

Siam was the incident in 1636, coined by Ten Brummelhuis and Kleinen the 'Dutch Picnic in Ayutthaya', which almost ended in the death of a few Dutchmen in the Thai kingdom.¹⁵ It was elaborately documented by Van Vliet whose traumatizing experience with this and other above-mentioned incidents significantly formed his opinion of King Prasatthong as an arbitrary and despotic Asian ruler.¹⁶ To sum up the story, in December of that year, while enjoying some leisure in Ayutthaya, two VOC employees, under the influence of alcohol, attacked the servants of King Prasatthong's brother and consequently were arrested and brought to his court. The other employees who came to secure the release of their compatriots were embroiled in a fight with the courtiers, were outnumbered and had to surrender to the Siamese. Outraged, King Prasatthong was on the verge of having these Dutchmen executed, besides restricting Dutch trade and stationing armed guards at their lodge. The *Opperhoofd* recognized the fact that the Siamese King was the 'supreme judge' who could put all the Dutchmen in his kingdom to death and that they would be powerless to stop him. Even though cognizant of this, Van Vliet criticized the King for having 'acted against the [Dutch] prisoners as if they had already been sentenced to death', without a proper investigation, to which his men were entitled according to the written laws of Siam. He hastened to drum up all the assistance he could at court, with one principal aim, namely, to 'soothe His Majesty's severity', which suggested that in his opinion King Prasatthong was acting on a whim rather than out of principle. At the same time, he was trying to save himself and his men in Siam by appealing to the higher instances, reminding the Siamese court that the execution of the Dutch would undermine the relations with the Governor-General as well as with the 'King of Holland'.¹⁷

In the end, whatever motives King Prasatthong may have had, perhaps trying to subject the Dutch to his rules as part of the consolidation of his power within Siam, as suggested by Ten Brummelhuis and Kleinen,¹⁸ or taking vengeance against the belligerent attitudes displayed by Governor-General Anthonio van Diemen towards him, as suggested by Van der Kraan,¹⁹ he stayed the intended execution of the Dutchmen and lifted the ban on the VOC trade. Instead, Prasatthong compelled Van Vliet, as the Chief of the Dutch in Siam, to perform before him a ritual which the *Opperhoofd* painfully recognized as an 'admission of guilt',²⁰ as well as to accept, in a written declaration, his responsibility for any mistakes committed by the VOC men in Siam in the future. This declaration also required the Dutch to conform to the laws and customs of the kingdom.²¹ In short, it was an attempt to subject the Dutch to the local legal procedures and punishments and to the power of the Siamese King—who promulgated Siamese law.

Prasatthong's act was certainly unacceptable to the Company which

alone, as a rule, administered justice to its own servants and Dutch free burghers. After successive attempts by the Governors-General, the VOC finally managed to use its advantageous situation during the conflict in 1663-4 to force the Siamese court to place its employees outside Siamese jurisdiction. Incorporated into the Dutch-Siamese Treaty of 1664, the following clause provided the VOC with what Robert Lingat defines as a *système des capitulations*, and Smith and Ten Brummelhuis labelled extra-territorial rights, namely the privilege of immunity from the local law enforcement for Company employees.²²

Should (God forbid!) any of the Company's residents commit a grave crime in Siam, neither the King nor the Siamese courts shall judge him, but he shall be delivered to the chief of the Honourable Company, in order to be punished according to Dutch law; and in case the said chief himself commit a capital crime, His Majesty shall have the power to place him under arrest until notice shall have been given of the same to the Governor-General.²³

Hence, the extraterritorial rights according to the 1664 Treaty in effect abolished the force of the declaration of responsibility of 1636.

In the absence of indigenous sources, we cannot know precisely what the Ayutthayan authorities thought about the extraterritorial rights of the Europeans. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that the Siamese court considered this privilege insignificant. Although King Narai also agreed to exempt the French, his close allies, from local jurisdiction as stated in the Franco-Siamese Treaty of 1687, two years earlier he had refused to grant the same privilege to the Portuguese who had sent an embassy to Ayutthaya from Goa to request it but who apparently lacked the influence to convince the King.²⁴

A quick comparison between the Dutch-Siamese and the Franco-Siamese treaties concluded during King Narai's reign points to a significant difference in the policies of the VOC and France towards Siam which, on the one hand, reflects the ambitions of the French Crown to promote both trade and religion, and, on the other hand, underlines the non-religious character of the Dutch presence there.

The first Franco-Siamese accord of 1685, signed only by Phaulkon, reveals the intention of the French to propagate the Roman Catholic faith in Siam, for it envisaged the freedom for French missionaries to preach and provided indigenous converts with some privileges. The local Christians were to be exempt from the royal *corvée* on Sundays and holy days, completely free from that service in old age, and they would have their own system of justice.²⁵ The subsequent Treaty of 1687 gave the French East India Company (*Compagnie des Indes Orientales*—CIO), established in 1664, the right to prosecute those of its employees who committed crimes against other employees in Siam, in its own way. If the

matter should entail a CIO employee and a person outside the Company service of whatever nationality, the employee should appear before a Siamese court, which would then include one or more Company officials. In the end, the fact that these French officials would actually give a verdict made this 'international court'²⁶ merely a formality. In effect, France asked for extraterritorial rights not only for its own subjects but also for the Roman Catholic community under its protection—which included converted subjects of the Siamese King. In contrast to the French, the VOC excluded any possibility of its employees going through the Siamese judicial procedure, even should they have inflicted injury on a Siamese. Although it seems that the Dutch Company, according to the Treaty of 1664, humbly limited the scope of extraterritoriality to cover only its employees and subjects like Dutch free burghers, and obviously had no intention of propagating religion, it actually did in some cases offer protection from Siamese law enforcement to the local people who lived within its settlement, as we shall see in the following paragraphs.

In the end, all the agreements between the French and the Siamese court became null and void immediately upon the demise of King Narai in 1688 and did not protect the French from the anger of his successor, Phetracha, and his followers who resented the French attempts to impose their political and religious agendas on Siam. Apparently, the Dutch had learnt that the ruling King could reverse or modify the law promulgated by his predecessors at any time. Therefore, they constantly tried to renew the Dutch-Siamese Treaty at the beginning of every reign in order to reconfirm their commercial and legal privileges.

Order and Protection: The VOC Settlement in Siam

As mentioned earlier, the Siamese King allowed many foreign communities in his realm to administer their own settlements and peoples, assuredly on condition that they observed the common order of society. The report on the Company's property of 1731, which included a list of the legal papers kept in the lodge, tells us about some of the rules which governed the daily life of foreigners in Ayutthaya. Most of them of course enumerated the commodities which the Dutch were permitted to buy or alternatively were prohibited from purchasing. One particular document is an order prohibiting all foreigners in Ayutthaya to make an appearance without advance permission at and around the royal court or any places where the King and the members of the royal family might happen to be present. Another was an order to keep a night watch to prevent fire, theft and other disorders in all districts of Siam. The last order concerned a prohibition on firing cannon or any ammunition or fireworks without the permission of the court.²⁷

The status of the VOC chief factor in Siam was complicated not only by his duty to lead the Company employees but also by his obligation to govern the indigenous inhabitants of the settlement. In accordance with the Siamese concept of social organization, the Dutch settlement was categorized as a *ban* (village) with the *Oppperhoofd* as a *nai* (head of the community) who, like the heads of other foreign communities, answered to the *Phrakhlang* Minister through the *Syabbandar* (harbour master) and via the interpreters.

The VOC settlement in Ayutthaya was established under conditions and in a way which reflected the importance of Siam to the Company, the dependency of the Dutch upon the Siamese court, and, at the same time, a certain degree of autonomy to handle its own affairs.

To put this in perspective, first of all, the *comptoir* or *factorij* in Ayutthaya must be seen as part of the broad network of the VOC settlements stretching from South Africa to East Asia. There were basically three types of settlements: unfortified trading-posts in domains of powerful rulers; fortified bases; and smaller forts to control vast areas and island groups. The features of the Ayutthaya factory placed it in the first category, which also included such VOC establishments as Deshima in Nagasaki, and those in Canton and in Surat—places where the Dutch had submitted to local rulers and lived under their protection.²⁸

As other foreign communities in Ayutthaya, the Dutch were dictated to by the Siamese authorities who decided where they should live and trade. When King Ekathotsarot permitted the VOC to establish a trading office in his capital in 1608, this Company lodge was located in a Muslim quarter within the city walls. Later, in 1634, King Prasatthong granted the Dutch a plot of land to build a new lodge, which became the place where VOC servants and their families were to live until the Company's final withdrawal from the kingdom. This new settlement was situated south of Ayutthaya proper on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River. It was closer to the river bank and larger—spacious enough to include warehouses—than the previous lodge, and therefore more convenient for loading and unloading goods. Fortunately, situated on a high isle, it was not easily flooded.²⁹ The lodge was protected with a bamboo fence, surrounded by a moat on the northern, eastern, and southern sides. A small bridge on each side connected the lodge with its main storehouse in the east and with the community surrounding it. The whole compound consisted of the main building, smaller storehouses, a garden, a cemetery, and a prison.³⁰ It was spacious enough to accommodate up to forty permanent employees as well as some sojourning sailors.³¹

In the beginning, the Siamese Government allowed the Dutch to build the main edifice of the lodge as they preferred, merely stipulating that it should not be too close to the river bank and not too high, thereby com-

plying with the custom of the country.³² This probably had to do with the security of the royal water procession which would sail down the river passing in front of the lodge. Indubitably, it was also linked to the idea that a foreign settlement should not compete with the magnificence of the palace and the temples in the city. Despite these restrictions, Gijsbert Heecq, a VOC surgeon who visited Ayutthaya in 1655, and Gervaise described the lodge as 'a strong and excellent building, fairly large and tall' and as 'one of the most beautiful and most spacious houses in the kingdom', respectively.³³ The said quality of the building reflected the determination of the Company in the 1630s that the Siam trade was worth an investment, which signalled a long stay. This two-storey building in European style was one of the first structures to be seen by visitors entering the city of Ayutthaya via the river and must have made them aware of the Dutch presence there.

Though far less than other reasons, the VOC compound also gave the Siamese court cause for dissatisfaction with the Dutch. In early 1636, some opponents at court—apparently trying to arouse the King's suspicions of the Dutch—told King Prasatthong that the VOC lodge had been extended to resemble a fort rather than a house, and that there were too many Company men in Ayutthaya. The Dutch protested but complied with the subsequent inquiry by submitting a plan of the building and a list of the present employees, which satisfied the King.³⁴ On another occasion, in 1732, King Thaisa's interest in the VOC settlement unfortunately transformed into irritation with it. In appreciation of the Company surgeon's part in the attempts to cure the wound in his palate—which turned out to be a fatal cancer—the monarch showed his interest in finding out more about the Dutch settlement. (King Thaisa must have seen it at least from the front because he often sailed down the river in pursuit of his favourite recreation—fishing.) Therefore, the court sent two servants to make drawings of the VOC lodge and its surroundings and used them to inform the King. Having seen the drawings, Thaisa became disturbed by the tombstones in the Dutch cemetery, probably because they resembled Thai pagodas. The *Phrakhlang* consequently recommended the Dutch tear down these 'pagodas'. Digging their toes in, the Dutch resisted, claiming that it was beyond the authority of the current *Oppelhoofd* and council to remove the tombstones which the families of the dead had erected with their own money.³⁵

The VOC had some other properties which were established by permission of the kings and were also indications of the range and nature of Dutch activities in the kingdom. Besides the *comptoir* in Ayutthaya, the Company possessed a warehouse called Amsterdam situated in the village of Ban Chao Phraya (often called the 'Sea Village' in the VOC records) at Pak Nam, the mouth of the Chao Phraya River, which is connected to the

present-day Gulf of Thailand; it was the place at which the East Indiamen called. The transportation between the warehouse and the lodge in Ayutthaya was carried out by vessels—small enough to sail the river—owned by the Siam *comptoir* or some local people. When Commissioner Rijckloff van Goens proposed its construction, he argued that the warehouse would protect the stored goods from the elements and facilitate the loading of the Company ships, and its supervisor would prevent the other employees from smuggling their own goods on the ships.³⁶ Besides this, in 1670, King Narai gave *Oppeerhoofd* Nicolaas de Roij (1669-72) a small plot of land at Wat Prodsat—two miles south of the lodge itself—to make a garden and a place for holidays/excursions. On this plot which was marked as a ‘property’ of the VOC in Siam stood a small brick house. By 1697, *Oppeerhoofd* Thomas van Son (1692-97) had turned it into a place for storing and sawing sappanwood to replace the workshop at Ban Chao Phraya where the Dutch had formerly had such work done, because the latter could no longer deliver sufficient quantities of wood. Although the labourers were no less expensive than those who lived around the river mouth, the Dutch hoped to be able to control the quality of work done at Wat Prodsat more efficiently.³⁷ For a period of time, the Company also owned a house in Lopburi. The increasingly long stays of King Narai and his courtiers, including the *Phrakhleng*, in that place from the mid-1670s required the Dutch to conduct their business there more often. Around 1687, this house was abandoned when the Dutch considered it no longer worth maintaining.³⁸ Last but not least, the Company had a smaller office in Ligor, operated by a few VOC residents, to procure tin. Over time, this settlement developed into a mixed community of VOC personnel and local people.

Admittedly, in dividing the foreign communities in Ayutthaya into *ban* according to nationality, the Siamese authorities intended to keep them apart from the (majority of the) indigenous society, thereby making them easier to control.³⁹ However, it would be wrong to see each foreign *ban* as a unit completely isolated from either the other foreign communities or the indigenous people.

By the seventeenth century, there was a considerable number of foreign communities residing outside Ayutthaya proper, especially trading communities established along the Chao Phraya River. These foreigners regularly interacted with each other. As a rule, the retiring VOC *Oppeerhoofden* recommended that their incumbent successors maintain daily contacts with other nations trading in Ayutthaya. Across the river opposite the Dutch lodge lived the Portuguese. As Heecq observed, the relationships between the Dutch and the Portuguese living in Siam were rather amicable, for pragmatic reasons.⁴⁰ The Portuguese delivered local goods to the Company besides offering a translation service because their language,

besides Malay, often served as *lingua franca* between the Dutch and the Siamese court. To the south of the VOC settlement were the English and Japanese *ban* as well as the Peguan (Mon) and Malay communities. The Dutch often engaged the Japanese for packing the animal skins they exported to Japan; they obtained these services through a contract with one of the local Japanese *nai*.⁴¹ Nor were the contacts between these communities purely commercial, they were social and cultural as well. In the absence of Dutch clergymen from Ayutthaya, the mainly Protestant Dutch often sought the service of the Portuguese Roman Catholic priests.⁴² The Dutch cemetery also accommodated some Englishmen after their death as fellows in faith.⁴³ It was reported that, in 1730, with 'people of other religions', the VOC *Opperhoofd* and his assistant attended the burial of René Charbonneau—a former medical attendant in the French missionary hospital and later the Governor of Phuket under King Narai—in the French settlement, after which the Dutch went to pay a visit to the French Bishop.⁴⁴ In 1733, the Roman Catholic 'Sinhora Donna Louisa Faulcon'—Phaulkon's daughter-in-law—appeared as a witness of the union between a VOC employee, Paulus Scheeper, and a Eurasian woman, Maria Wens.⁴⁵ Such events reflect the cosmopolitan and almost ecumenical daily life of the foreign population in Ayutthaya which was sometimes overshadowed by the hostile rhetoric spouted against each other, especially among the Europeans, in their written accounts.

Smith has presented Ayutthaya as an example of a place where 'the Dutch community interacted with, but was not integrated into' the local society.⁴⁶ The living conditions for the Dutch in sovereign Siam were different from such 'transplanted' colonial towns in Asia as Batavia and Colombo. Most importantly, the VOC never considered Ayutthaya a place where it wanted to settle a large number of Europeans; it was only a trading station. As elsewhere in Asia, the absence of European-Dutch women led to cohabitation and miscegenation between the VOC men and local (Siamese, Mon, Lao, or mestizo) women. The VOC reports from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries reveal that the Dutch settlement had evolved to include not only the Company lodge but also an adjacent village, referred to with the Malay word as the *kampong*, where the population was composed of descendants of the VOC employees and the Dutch free burghers and, in a greater number, indigenous people who were attracted to live in the near vicinity because of the prospect of paid jobs and the protection which the Company sometimes afforded.

In the 1720 instruction for his successor, the outgoing *Opperhoofd* Wijbrand Blom (1717-20) reminded Hendrik Verburg (1721-2) that the administration of the Dutch settlement in Siam tended to be based on oral tradition; hence his instruction was based on experience gathered

from his predecessors.⁴⁷ The content of this instruction, precisely the part which concerns the enforcement of law and order in the settlement, has four main points. Firstly, the document reveals how the VOC understood its jurisdiction over its settlement in Ayutthaya. Secondly, it gives an operational instruction to the trade director telling him how to maintain order in the settlement. Thirdly, it suggests how to counter the local authority in the event of legal transgressions within the settlement or involving the residents of the settlement. Lastly, it instructs him how to behave in the presence of the Siamese royalty.

Blom emphasized to Verburg that the VOC exercised full control over its lodge. No one could come to settle down within the privileged terrain which had belonged to the Company for almost a century without the permission of the *Oppehoofd*.⁴⁸ Although the Dutch jurisdiction over the settlement was not included in the Dutch-Siamese Treaty, it was built upon a common understanding between the VOC and the Siamese authorities that both the terrain where the Company lodge was situated and its vessels were imbued with a kind of immunity from local law enforcement. This unwritten agreement appears to have been a precursor of diplomatic immunity.

Next, Blom pointed out that the Company wanted to maintain good relations with such ordinary working people as carpenters, coolies or sailors (for inland routes), and the like, whom it regularly needed for all kinds of work. These local inhabitants of the settlement hoped to benefit from the privileges and protection which the Dutch offered them or even created for them—special rights which, in Blom's words, 'could not be found outside the *kampong* other than through an almost daily practice of bribery'.⁴⁹

When the attempts of *kampong* inhabitants to sell small commodities at the nearby bazaar next to Wat Phananchong (north of the Dutch settlement) had been repeatedly obstructed by the bazaar master, Blom solved this problem by procuring a licence from the court which allowed the Dutch to establish a market in their settlement in the grounds behind the lodge. In return, the bazaar paid a tax of four *taels* or 28.16 florins per year to the Siamese Government. The *Oppehoofd* appointed one resident to collect the rent from the traders on a daily basis. Blom remarked that the market not only yielded a rather satisfying income, it also offered a pleasantly large variety of goods. The Dutch certainly discerned the dynamics of the local economy and took advantage of the prospering domestic markets—which evidently were under royal control.⁵⁰

With regard to the people in the settlement, Blom pointed out that no one had the power to arrest any inhabitant of the *kampong* other than by the express instruction of the *Phrakhleng* or the court. To ensure that this was observed, the arrest warrant must be addressed first to the Company

interpreters, who would then communicate it to the *Opperhoofd*. Should someone insist on arresting a resident on his own authority and without the express instructions of the court, the Company employees should either courteously escort him out of the *kampong*, or tell him to resubmit his demand via the *Phrakhlang*.⁵¹

The Dutch side also had obligations. Consequently, as a result of prevailing Siamese law, in a case of manslaughter, creating an affray and the like which caused injury or death, the perpetrator must immediately be arrested to prevent his escape. The case must be reported to the *Phrakhlang*. The Company should try to secure a fair process in the court. Whenever a murder, manslaughter, serious physical assault, or theft occurred, the local authority would draw a circle around the crime scene. For this purpose, a pole was planted on the spot where the crime had been committed, to which was tied a cord about thirty-six fathoms long. Taking that pole as the centre, the cord was stretched out to create a circle. Those who lived within the radius of this circle were to be arrested and interrogated to find out whether they had been complicit in the crime. If they were not involved, for failing to help prevent the crime, they still had to pay a fine which was no less than five *taels* or thirty-six florins and to bear the further costs of the arrest. Blom warned that the employment of this local method could also affect the Dutch *kampong*, should a crime be committed nearby.⁵²

In the event of a fire within the settlement, the VOC should act according to the local law by arresting the head of the house in which the fire had broken out and immediately summon him to be tried in a criminal process. Blom actually considered this Siamese rule a 'sound concept'. Nevertheless, he emphasized that the VOC must act quickly to prevent the arrest of such an individual by the Siamese authorities and try him within the *kampong* or by the Company's own Council of Justice, even without instructions from the *Phrakhlang* or the court. In this way, friction with the local government might be prevented.⁵³

As a further precaution, the number of the bamboo-built houses in the *kampong* must be limited because they could catch fire easily. Fires caused by carelessness indeed occurred annually. To prevent a repetition of the great fire of 1718, Blom himself had ordered some houses to be torn down and some others to be moved further away from the lodge. Yet, he admitted that it was rather difficult to exercise control over the way houses were constructed in the settlement. For example, when someone asked for permission to plant a garden on the northern side of the lodge, very soon a house appeared there to be followed by all kinds of other buildings.⁵⁴

Apparently the VOC tried to limit the number of residents in its settlement. Blom described the Siamese as a 'quarrelsome nation' and, therefore, he warned that the more of them lived in the lodge, the more

problems these people would cause, thereby bringing the Dutch chiefs into strife with the local government. However much the VOC relied on the co-operation of the people in its settlement, in order to avoid conflicts with the Siamese Government, the lodge authorities had to remove anyone who misbehaved from the *kampong*. Sometimes, as a warning, the trouble-makers could be gaoled for a few days and flogged in imitation of the Dutch custom of maintaining discipline on ships.⁵⁵

According to the Dutch experience, some undesirable local types occasionally tried to move into the *kampong* on the pretext of being friends of the inhabitants in order to escape the administration of punishment by the local government. In an attempt to prevent this kind of opportunism, Blom had ordered an annual census of the inhabitants, which was to be conducted in January of every year. The Dutch also intended to use this registration as evidence to convince the local authorities of their good intentions, when they had to confirm or deny the residence status of the persons who might have been involved in legal problems.⁵⁶ Actually, the first survey had probably been made in January 1689, when, as a result of the unrest caused by the sudden presence of an unusual number of criminals in Ayutthaya, the VOC decided to compile a list with a description of the inhabitants of its *kampong*. Although the *Opperhoofd* unfortunately decided not to include that list in his report, his excuse that it was not worth reporting to Batavia because the inhabitants, especially the petty traders and coolies, constantly changed, it also gives us a glimpse of the sorts of people in the Dutch settlement.⁵⁷ The only surviving statistics of the local residents of the Dutch *kampong* date from 1732, listing 240 households or 1443 men, women, and children.⁵⁸

Debt settlement was a logical exception to the attempted self-administration of justice by the Dutch, in the sense that the VOC entrusted this problem to the local law enforcement. It was so important a matter that it was included in the 1664 Treaty.

In case, ... a debtor of the Honourable Company refuse [*sic*] the payment of his debt, His Majesty after being duly advised to that effect by Oya Berckelang, ... shall assist the Honourable Company to recover its claim by arresting the defaulter and keeping him in custody until the claim shall have been settled. If, however, the Honourable Company might fail to obtain in this way the full payment of its claim, the King or Oya Berckelang [*sic*] shall be bound to deliver the debtor to the said Company.⁵⁹

Blom's instruction shows that the same procedure was to be applied to the local inhabitants of the Dutch settlement. If a resident had incurred a debt and refused to pay it, he should be referred to the *Phrakhleng*. His debt should be settled according to Siamese custom.⁶⁰ Since the Dutch very much needed the help of the local government in this matter, they were willing to reciprocate as well.

The same rules—claiming Dutch jurisdiction over the terrain of the settlement, prohibiting the arrest of *kampong* settlers without the knowledge of the lodge authorities, and the registration and control of the settlers—were applied to the settlement in Ligor.⁶¹ From Blom's instruction, we can see that: first, the VOC chose to deal with cases of fire itself; secondly, it was willing to call in the local authority to solve matters arising from debt; and lastly, it was obliged to trust the case of a murder or physical assault to local justice. However, Blom reminded his successor that, whenever a European employee was accused of being the offender, the *Oppehoofd* as well as the local authority must rule on the case in accordance with the extraterritorial clause in the Dutch-Siamese Treaty. By virtue of the said agreement and Dutch law, neither in the case of debt, physical assault, nor manslaughter could a European employee be arrested by the Siamese authorities, summoned to appear in a local court, interrogated, sentenced, or executed by the Siamese Government.⁶²

In general, the VOC tried to keep its employees' affairs in its own hands. There was one exception in 1713 when the Dutch sailor Jodocus de Vries was murdered by some Chinese, among them the servant of a Chinese official. Since the case involved two foreign parties, it required arbitration by the Siamese authorities. After a long struggle by the Dutch, the Siamese judges only sentenced the murderers to life imprisonment on the grounds that they were not subjects of the Siamese King and therefore could not be given a death sentence in Siam. In the absence of legal evidence to prove the existence of this rule, we have to resort to the explanation that strong Chinese elements at King Thaisa's court may have intervened to protect their convicted countrymen.⁶³

To return to the last point of Blom's instruction, another highly important matter to which he drew his successor's attention was the manner in which to prepare the VOC lodge and employees for any appearance of Siamese royalty. The mere presence of the Siamese King had legal implications in itself. The code of conduct was certainly known among the employees stationed in Siam.⁶⁴ However, Blom carefully instructed his successor, who was a newcomer, what points of etiquette to observe whenever the King and his suite passed by the lodge. The Dutch were obliged to decorate the front fence of the lodge and Company vessels with flags. The Company's ceremonial barge also had to be manned with rowers. The Company guards should be relocated from in front of the gateway to behind the fence. The *Oppehoofd* and his assistant were to present themselves under a tent waiting to greet the King in the Siamese way as he and his suite were passing by. While the royal procession was passing, no one was allowed to traverse the river side in front of the lodge or to stare at the royals.⁶⁵ An infringement of the rule could be punished with death.

Conflicts

Apart from the commercial disagreements which occurred almost daily, incidents involving the Company settlement and its residents sometimes brought the Dutch into conflict with the Siamese authorities. In practice, the written agreement and unwritten legal traditions were fairly regularly contested by both sides.

Despite the rising power of the VOC in Asia, at any time the Siamese King could in practice pressurize the Company men in his realm by the very fact that, devoid of any substantial military capacity, their lives were left to his mercy alone. Throughout its time there, laying siege to the VOC lodge in Ayutthaya was one of the most usual ways the court expressed its dissatisfaction with the Dutch and by which it tried to force them to make concessions. Sometimes, the 'immunity' of the VOC personnel and lodge was contested; which in effect meant that the degree of the 'immunity' tended to be dependent on the actual state of the relations between the Company and the Siamese Crown. On one occasion, in early 1689, the Siamese Minister of Justice sent his men into the Dutch settlement to arrest some *kampong* inhabitants and take them to prison without informing the *Opperhoofd*. When the Dutch immediately protested to the *Phrakhleng*, on principle to 'preserve the privilege of the lodge' rather than in an attempt to defend the rights of those captives, the Minister had to apologize for violating the Company's immunity.⁶⁶ This happened at a time when the VOC enjoyed great favour from the newly crowned King Phetracha. During the eighteenth century, the Siamese court increasingly resorted to inspections of the VOC lodge and ships. The search for contraband goods occasionally gave the Siamese officials a reason to try to inspect the Dutch settlement and vessels. In 1713, the officials raided the *kampong* looking for opium; the incident resulted in a scuffle and the death of the mestizo interpreter Pieter Brochebourde.⁶⁷ In 1731, the Siamese wanted to search a Company ship which allegedly had a contraband cargo of elephant tusks. The Dutch vehemently argued that this would be an act against the 'long tradition' which gave them immunity. Eventually, both parties found a compromise; the Dutch unloaded the suspected tusks from the ship and took them to the lodge for inspection by the officials.⁶⁸ A few other cases during the reign of King Borommakot, which point to the vulnerability of the Dutch in Siam despite the legal assurance they thought they had achieved, will be examined in Chapter Seven where they can be better understood in their own context.

The Dutch and the Siamese jurisdictions did or would theoretically overlap each other on three counts: the local inhabitants of the Dutch settlement; the VOC employees who also took the service of the king; and the offspring of VOC fathers and indigenous mothers.

More minor conflicts may have appeared on a daily basis when the Dutch tried to have control of and give protection to non-VOC employees. In some cases the Dutch did no more than to try to prevent *kampong* residents from being investigated by Siamese law enforcement. Sometimes they even attempted to free the residents from the labour recruitment by the court, as they did in 1731, though without success, when men in the settlement were taken for the construction of a pagoda.⁶⁹ The recruitment of men by the Siamese authorities, whether for the preparation of a grand ceremony, war, or construction work as in this case, deprived the VOC of labourers to pursue its own business.

If we compare the number of the local (presumably indigenous as well as mestizo) residents of the Dutch settlement—the statistics of 1732 pointed to about 1,500 persons—to the number of the population of Ayutthaya—Anthony Reid has suggested an estimation of 200,000 people for the late seventeenth century—the former seems to be insignificant as it does not reach even one per cent of the latter.⁷⁰ Although the Dutch clearly had no intention of expanding their power in this matter, it is still a fact that, up to the early eighteenth century as our sources reveal, at least some of these 1,500 people, who moved into the Dutch settlement for benefit and protection, simultaneously moved away from their original Siamese *nai* towards a foreign one. Therefore, the VOC in Siam also functioned in a pattern of patron-client relationship modelled on the Siamese model with a foreign body being the patron of the indigenous clients.

Although the Dutch director bore a court rank, the King did not claim his assets after his demise, which confirmed that his position at court was fairly decorative. One extraordinary case was that of the VOC doctor of French Huguenot origin, Daniel Brochebourde, who was loaned in 1672, with the approval of Batavia, to attend King Narai in his medical capacity. He became the favourite of Kings Narai and Phetracha, and his mestizo descendants, including the above-mentioned Pieter, continued serving both the Crown and the Company in Siam as court physicians and interpreters. Though, after having served both the VOC and the Siamese court, when Daniel died in 1697, the money he left reverted to the Crown for the reason that it was the result of the King's generosity towards him and that his heirs, who were born of an indigenous woman and therefore subjects of the King, were considered to be subject to the inheritance law of Siam and the royal jurisdiction which authorized the King to become the heir of his deceased servants. In this case, the VOC *Opperhoofd* allowed the process of Siamese law to take its course without any protest.⁷¹

As time passed, jurisdiction over the mestizo children became a regular source of conflict between the VOC and the Siamese court. In Siam

natives and children of natives—including those who were partly foreign—were automatically the subjects of the King. The laws of 1633 and 1663, promulgated by Prasatthong and Narai respectively, forbade Thai and Mon women to cohabit with foreign men holding ‘erroneous beliefs’, including Europeans, Javanese, and Malays. The Kings were concerned that such unions and the resultant offspring would harm the Buddhist religion and the State, as well as being worried that the manpower of Siam would be diluted by confusion about the children’s identity.⁷² Obviously it proved impossible to uphold this law in the cosmopolitan society of Ayutthaya. The fact that each case concerning Dutch-indigenous children was treated differently from another reflects how the Dutch-Siamese relations stood at that moment. The matter was complicated even more because the Siamese authorities, recognizing the weak point of the Dutch in their concern about the considerable number of their mestizo offspring in Siam, sometimes used the seizure of these children as a means to punish the Dutch during the recurrent crises in their relations.

The VOC occasionally retrieved children from their Asian mothers when their European fathers had died or had been repatriated.⁷³ It seemed that the Dutch would rather place these Eurasian offspring in the orphanage in Batavia than leave them in the care of their indigenous mothers to be brought up in a ‘heathen’ way. In 1689, the Siam *comptoir* asked the Governor-General to consider taking the half-Dutch children born of local women to Batavia, or having an orphanage built in Ayutthaya.⁷⁴ This is an indication that the mestizo children—whose number unfortunately was not mentioned—had become a ‘problem’ to the VOC office in Ayutthaya which required a solution from the High Government.

Whenever the VOC wanted to take local or mestizo wives and/or children of its employees out of the country, it had to ask royal permission for each particular case, mostly not without trouble but with reasonable success. Despite their attempts to prohibit the cohabitation between indigenous women and non-Buddhist foreigners, Kings Prasatthong and Narai had allowed the Dutch to take some mestizo children out of the kingdom without much objection.⁷⁵ The VOC managed to force into the terms of the 1664 Treaty that Dutch-indigenous children under seven years of age were to be allowed to leave Siam. We do not know for certain whether this was fully observed.

Exceptionally difficult was the extrication of Van Vliet’s children because their mother, Osoet, who was an influential Mon merchant, had successfully activated all her contacts at court to prevent them from being sent to Batavia, until her death in 1658.⁷⁶ Another problematic case occurred when, around 1690-1, Daniel Brochebourde’s son, Moses, wanted to leave the Company service. *Opperhoofd* Pieter van den Hoorn (1688-91) consequently threatened to send him to Batavia. The

Phrakhlang took young Brochebourde under his protection, claiming that Moses was the King's subject, because he had been born to a local woman, and had entered royal service.⁷⁷ In the end, the Dutch considered it not worth a dispute with the court and gave Moses Brochebourde up. In 1706, when the VOC was temporarily withdrawing from Siam after a dispute with the Crown, the bookkeeper Gerrit de Haas asked for the court's permission to take along his wife, who was a Dutch-Mon mestizo, and their children. King Sūa refused on the grounds that they were his subjects, but he was probably also acting out a grudge he bore against the Company. Finally, in 1710, upon the plea of the Governor-General, the new King, Thaisa, granted permission.⁷⁸ In short, this was a political matter in itself, since each party involved exercised its power or resorted to its connections with the powerful to defend its interests.

Conclusion

Ten Brummelhuis has asserted that '[the] etiquette of the Siamese court also made the position of [VOC trade] director even more important than it already was in the company hierarchy'.⁷⁹ Yet, it was not only his status in the hierarchy of the Siamese court but his actual responsibility as the *nai* of the Dutch *ban* which made him very important in Siamese society. Life at the lodge reveals another obligation of the Dutch towards the Siamese King: besides their roles as diplomats and courtiers, they were 'administrative officials', a body governing a part of the population in Ayutthaya. In this sense, the Dutch were more integrated into the Siamese system than Smith has suggested: that the Dutch-Siamese interactions could be seen only at the higher level of Thai society, at court.⁸⁰

Although the Company's naval blockade of 1663-4 and several threats to the Dutch from the Siamese authorities must have aroused a sense of caution on both sides, the limits of the relations between the VOC and the Siamese court were never tested. These measures served instead as signals that the one was seeking for a concession from the other. Although the Dutch were privileged with the 'extraterritorial rights', in practice they felt vulnerable and carefully avoided any conflict with the Siamese authorities. That privilege did not have any real effect on legal procedure in Ayutthaya in the way that its successor, the 'Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between the Netherlands and Siam' of 1860, had in the nineteenth century.⁸¹

Smith's above-mentioned comment does not reflect the whole reality of the Dutch presence during the Ayutthaya Period, but this is understandable as it is based on the VOC records of the seventeenth century. Contrary to the earlier period, the VOC men in the eighteenth century

increasingly reported about affairs concerning the Company settlement and its inhabitants and less and less about their participation at court. Unquestionable, this implies an increasing commitment of the Dutch towards their immediate environment in Siam. Yet, perhaps the Dutch resorted to reporting more on their lodge and its affairs, because they had become politically and economically less significant in the kingdom. Furthermore, the mounting number of incidents, which the Dutch considered 'harassments' by the Siamese officials, indicates that the Dutch now did not enjoy as highly privileged a position as they had under the seventeenth-century Siamese Kings.

CHAPTER THREE

LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF RITUAL: THE DUTCH AT THE COURT OF KING PRASATTHONG

Introduction

The Emperor or King of Siam holds residence and court here [in Ayutthaya] in a magnificent and very fine palace, separately walled, well-placed within the city walls, no costs spared in its construction, for our countrymen a marvel to behold. He is a powerful and wealthy monarch indeed, [and the city surpasses] any place in the Indies (except for China) in terms of populace, elephants, gold, gemstones, shipping, commerce, trade and fertility.¹

Such was the impression of *Oppperhoofd* Van Nijenrode of the splendour of the royal court and the ruler of Siam. He was the first of a series of VOC employees who, in their writings, gave a coherent picture of their daily-life encounters with early modern Thai society. In his account of 1621, he tried to convince his superiors in Batavia not to close down the office in Ayutthaya when the Company was passing through a difficult phase in its trade with East Asia. Although his attempt failed, his arguments are still interesting. He not only enumerated the strategic advantages of Siam to maritime trade, stressing its excellent location and the fertility of its soil, but also strove to substantiate his plea by linking the visible affluence of the Siamese King and his 'trade-oriented' subjects with the prospect of profit for the Company. Open-mindedly, Van Nijenrode asserted that the King of Siam made his daily appearance with 'a magnificence surpassing any Christian king'. He emphasized that King Songtham, under whose rule the kingdom was peaceful and prosperous, was friendly to foreigners but particularly favoured the Dutch. Besides granting commercial privileges, the ruler also showed the Dutch his goodwill in 'daily contact and conversation' and allowed them 'free access to the Court whenever we [the Dutch] wished to, which no other foreign nation, whether the English, Portuguese or Moors, has ever been granted'.²

Admittedly, by the time King Prasatthong usurped the throne in 1629, the period of acclimatisation of the Dutch in Siam seemed to have long been over. Even so, this moment of time will be taken as the starting point of an extensive study of the interactions between the Company men and the Siamese court for the following reasons. First of all, from the beginning of this reign, the Company reports from Siam became better organ-

ized and, more importantly, have been preserved in considerable numbers for present-day researchers. Only two detailed descriptions—Van Nijenrode's above-mentioned account and Schouten's report on the reception of the Dutch embassy at King Songtham's court in 1628—are available for the preceding period.

Secondly, *Oppeerhoofd* Schouten and his successor Van Vliet, who both served in Siam during the early years of King Prasatthong's reign, have left us extraordinary in-depth accounts of elite and ordinary life there. Schouten's Company correspondence shows that he combined the talents of a capable merchant and a tactful diplomat. His 'Description of Siam' written in 1636, was the first European account of Siam and was published two years later.³ It was the fruits of his long experience in the kingdom first as an assistant (1622-9) and subsequently as trade director (1633-6). Throughout his service in Siam from 1633 to 1641, the hot-headed Van Vliet showed himself no less keen an observer. In addition to his portrayal of contemporary society, he also compiled histories of the Siamese Kings.⁴ Sharing the same intellectual interest, Van Vliet admitted that he was also influenced by Schouten's writing.⁵ Yet, the two men were different in temperament and in part of their views of the Kings and the court of Siam.

Thirdly, Dutch sources on Prasatthong's reign bear witness to the ongoing learning process of the Company servants about the nature of the Siamese court. When the growth of the Japan trade prompted the VOC to re-open its trading office in Ayutthaya in 1633, the Company was still in the process of gathering knowledge about its Asian partners and competitors. Its employees, mostly freshly arrived from Europe, regarded their host environment with as much caution as fascination. In the case of Siam, since his personality and policy were different from his predecessor's, the reign of King Prasatthong was decisively another knowledge-seeking epoch for the Company men. They were still learning to maintain and improve their communication with the court, linguistically as well as behaviourally. Diplomatic protocol and court ceremonial—the language of ritual which connected the Dutch and the Siamese—were the crucial parts which, allied with trade negotiations, constituted the context in which the VOC and the Siamese court carried on their business.

Dutch-Siamese Diplomatic Exchange

From the outset, the Dutch had been made aware that active diplomacy was one of the main policies of Siam. As they were in many places in Asia, trade and ritual often were inextricably mixed at the Siamese court. Schouten asserted it was essential for any foreign envoy to attend an audi-

ence with the Siamese King before he was allowed to start negotiating his business with the local trade officials.⁶ Emphasizing the benefits of diplomacy, Van Nijenrode believed that the many privileges which the VOC enjoyed were grounded in the respect the Siamese King had for his 'brother and sworn friend', the Prince of Orange.⁷ The Dutch also learnt the essential rule: observe the hierarchical order which structured foreign relations of the kingdom, of which they themselves were a part, and in which they tried to maintain and improve their position. The following paragraphs will deal with the receptions of four Dutch embassies at the Siamese court during the period of 1628-41, which was the last phase in the formal contacts between the King of Siam and the Prince of Orange—the zenith of the Dutch-Siamese diplomatic exchange.

Two Hours of Honour: The Dutch Embassy, 1628

While still an assistant, Schouten composed a detailed report of the reception of the Dutch embassy in Ayutthaya in September 1628, which showed his delicate skills of observation. Although this took place in (the last year of) King Songtham's reign, as the 'first' elaborate European account of Siamese diplomatic protocol, it deserves to be treated here in detail. From the beginning, Schouten emphasized that the arrival of this embassy greatly delighted the King because he ordered the missive from the Prince of Orange to be collected from the Company vessel and translated into Thai within a few days, which was contrary to the usual custom that would have had the embassy waiting outside the city for ten to fourteen days after its arrival.⁸ The expeditiousness can be explained because this missive was the answer the Siamese ruler had long been waiting for, since, in late 1621, he himself had sent letters, in which he requested a VOC naval force to attack Cambodia, and valuable gifts to both Prince Maurice and Governor-General Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1619-23, 1627-9).⁹ The letter to the Stadholder was taken to the Dutch Republic by Coen's return fleet. Only when Coen was planning to return to Asia did he urge the new Prince of Orange, Frederick Henry, who succeeded his brother in 1625, to reciprocate.

Upon the news of the embassy's arrival, the *Phrakhlang* Minister ordered the Governor of Bangkok¹⁰ to dispatch a few barges to collect the missive of the Prince of Orange from the Dutch vessels at Ban Chao Phraya. The princely letter was taken aboard one of the Siamese ceremonial barges and placed in a round, red cabinet with silk curtains. Proceeding upstream, this barge took precedence and was followed in good order by boats carrying the Governor, the Dutch, and other Siamese officials. The Dutch travelled in a long, black-lacquered *prahu* with thirty rowers, sitting under a red tent and flying the prince's flag. The pro-

cession was accompanied by the music of flutes and drums. In Bangkok, they were awaited by a beautiful long *prahu* with fifty oars; the letter was now placed under its gilded pavilion. Twelve prominent personages of Bangkok were present, each in his own boat. Altogether sixteen barges and around 400 men now progressed towards the capital, while other boats made way for this official company, drawing aside to wait by the river bank. When they reached the toll house at Bangtanao, a mile from Ayutthaya, the grandees of Bangkok took their leave and returned downstream.

On the following day, one of the King's barges manned by seventy to eighty rowers came to take over transport of the princely missive. It bore a painted cabinet with pyramidal roof hung with silk curtains and bearing two silk parasols. It was accompanied by a number of courtiers on no less than thirty barges. At this point, the letter was transferred from its container into a gold bowl which stood on a big wooden dais within the pavilion on the said royal barge. Finally, the letter arrived at a 'beautiful gilded temple facing the city' where it was translated in the presence of many *khunnang*. In this letter, Prince Frederick Henry officially announced his succession to his brother's honours and expressed his gratitude for the favour King Songtham had shown towards the Dutch during the 1624 incident. But he avoided committing himself to Songtham's request for help to suppress Cambodia, claiming that his knowledge of the affair was not up-to-date. Both the original missive and its translation were immediately sent to the royal palace. Schouten reassured his superiors that the princely missive was accorded more splendour than any from other rulers.¹¹ It should be noted that the letter from the Governor-General to the *Phrakhlang* was collected and translated separately on another occasion.

The next step would usually be an audience to welcome the visiting ambassador. On this occasion this was dispensed with because the delegate, Willem Cunningham, had died during the journey to Ayutthaya. Instead, *Oppelhoofd* Adriaan de Marees and Schouten were invited to attend the customary royal banquet given by the monarch for his officials. It was at this event that the Dutch were asked to present the gifts from the Netherlands formally to King Songtham because, as Schouten observantly remarked, 'His Majesty wanted the missive and gifts from His Royal Grace [Prince of Orange] to be delivered on such an important day and in the presence of his most prominent vassals'.¹² The Dutch were well aware of the functions of foreign elements at the Ayutthayan court: not only were the use of foreign, especially luxurious, goods and inventions indispensable but also the presence of foreign embassies was an integral part of the power display of the ruler. The gifts from the Stadholder (worth more than 4,000 guilders) consisted of a gilded suit of armour

including halberd and shield, two pistols, pieces of Dutch gold *laken*, and a big mirror framed in silver.

On 25 September, the princely gifts and the VOC representatives were picked up by court barges. They first waited in a temple opposite the royal palace until around two o'clock in the afternoon to be summoned. Leaving their four assistants in the forecourt, De Marees and Schouten proceeded into the inner court barefoot despite the ground which was still wet after the rain. Behind the third gate, beautiful elephants were standing and more than a thousand servants of the *khunnang*, who attended the ceremony, were waiting for their masters. Schouten noticed that the gate to the most inner court remained closed and was heavily guarded. The Dutchmen waited until their names were called. Once they had passed through, the gate was immediately closed. Now, they found themselves in a big square with 5,000-6,000 armed men drawn up in good order. Here, the Dutch fell on their knees to pay the customary homage—thrice lifting up their folded hands and bowing to the ground—in the direction of the quarters of the King. They were allowed to rise and walk, with their hands still folded, to the middle of the square, where they were once more obliged to perform the same gesture of reverence. At the end of this square, they crossed a small wooden bridge, at the beginning of which, on each side, there was a small stable of two beautiful horses caparisoned with gold and precious stones. Once over the bridge, the Dutch made the obeisance another time and entered the higher square situated to the right of the grand audience hall. In the front section of the grand audience hall was the window throne (*siha banchon*), raised four fathoms above the floor, where the King showed himself on some occasions. Some forty feet to each side of this throne stood two richly-decorated elephants. Court officials, their faces bent downwards, lay prone on both sides of the square. After performing one more obeisance, the Dutch 'crawled' into the hall via the steps on the right side of the window throne. Having crossed the threshold, they performed their obeisance again. The audience hall was very big and long, supported by four rows of fifty wooden pillars each. The two rows in the middle were taller than the others (because they supported a triangular-shaped roof). Between the walls of the audience hall and the outer pillars sat musicians and court servants. On the inside of them, between the lower and higher pillars sat the lower-ranking officials. The most prominent *khunnang* sat between the two rows of high pillars. Besides the court servants, Schouten estimated the number of the King's officials at some 400-500 people. After many more reverences, the Dutch finally reached their sitting places at the fifth pillar from the end of the hall. From there, they beheld on their left-hand side the gifts from the Prince of Orange, as well as the gold and silver tributary flowers (*bunga emas dan perak*) from the vassal states of Siam—both

symbolizing the King's international fame. Right in front of them was the main throne to which they, again, did not forget to execute a reverential gesture. While setting themselves in the Siamese way—half-sitting and half-prone on their elbows—, Schouten noticed that, in front of him, about twenty people of high status—for they wore a golden headdress—surrounded the letter of Prince Frederick Henry which was raised three feet above ground in a gold cup standing on a big gold bowl. Despite the magnificence of the whole event, Schouten still found something to criticize: the 'poorly painted' hall and roof as well as the floor covered with 'cheap' rattan mats.¹³

Schouten's description then came to King Songtham. The monarch appeared on the main throne, clad in white and wearing a long white pyramidal-shaped head-cloth offset by a tiara adorned with many precious stones, which was 'not unlike the papal crown'. The royal throne consisted of three pieces rising up from a base in the form of a pyramid. It was skilfully made, gilded, and exquisitely embellished with mother-of-pearl and black lacquer. On both sides of the throne stood several parasols of different sizes: the tallest one was seven feet high on a golden pole twenty-five feet long.

Despite the great number of people present, Schouten was impressed by the astonishing silence which reigned in the audience hall. An official announced the presence of the letter, gifts, and representatives of the Prince of Orange, 'whom they [the Siamese] called in their own way the King of Holland'. The *Phrakhlang* explained to the assembly that the missive and presents from King Songtham had reached the Prince of Orange who had in his turn responded with these letter and gifts, which had made their way to Siam via Batavia. The content of the letter was respectfully read aloud in Thai by the King's 'upper secretary'. The monarch asked De Marees and Schouten whether they had anything else to say. But, at this moment, they only showed their gratitude for his favour. The King expressed his condolences on the deaths of the ambassador and Prince Maurice as well as his congratulations on the succession of the new Stadholder. He gave De Marees and Schouten each a gold cup and a piece of damask, which was immediately swathed around their bodies. Schouten showed his appreciation of the 'enjoyable' music, which was played during the ceremony and alternated with a long prayer chanted by a court Brahman.¹⁴

The readiness of the Dutch to comply with court custom did have its limits. De Marees and Schouten refused to bathe their faces in what the latter called 'holy water', presumably regarding it as a 'heathen' practice. The water was sent around to the courtiers in a silver cup, and presented exclusively to the King in a gold cup by one of his Brahmans who performed the ceremony. Subsequently, food, sweets, fruit, and water were

served in silver cups. Van Nijenrode had remarked that at the Siamese court 'no plates and cups for eating and drinking are used unless fashioned of pure gold and silver'.¹⁵ During the banquet, Schouten noticed that guards with gold sabres, with their back to the pillars, kept watch over the whole gathering. After the meal, each participant received a spoonful of fragrant unguent to apply to his face and hair and a small wreath of flowers to put on his hair. These seemed to be more agreeable to the Dutch. Once more, Schouten found the music during the banquet 'sweet and melodious'.

When the music stopped, the whole gathering paid homage to the King, again. King Songtham now commenced a formal conversation with his Dutch guests, asking them about the well-being of the Prince of Orange. The Dutch answered positively and did not fail to mention to the monarch that their Prince was engaged in the war with Spain, obviously to remind him of the ongoing Dutch-Iberian hostility. Upon the King's 'encouragement' to speak freely about the wishes of the Governor-General, both VOC men now tried to explain their business, especially stressing their wish to export Siamese rice to Batavia. However, their attempt was abortive because their request was not translated and conveyed to the King by the *Phrakhlang* who, as was his duty, supervised the conversation between the King and the foreign guests and indeed the whole protocol. At last, the Dutch accepted the fact that they had no chance of succeeding. Schouten had two possible explanations for this: either their effort had indeed jarred against the protocol which governed the whole event, or it was sabotaged by the *Phrakhlang's* attempt to obstruct the VOC business—probably with the intention of keeping the matter subservient to his own manipulations. Finally, King Songtham withdrew from the scene behind the curtain which was closed with surprising speed.¹⁶

From this event, Schouten drew one more conclusion, which reflected his opinion of how the Dutch were treated at the Siamese court. He considered it an unusual honour for any foreigner in the kingdom that the Dutch were allowed to join a court ceremony for more than two hours. Schouten must have been informed that audiences for foreigners usually lasted a shorter time.

On 4 January 1629, De Marees and Schouten bade their farewell to the new King, Chethathirat, the successor of his father who had died on 12 December 1628. Despite the fact that the Dutch had been ordered by the High Government in Batavia to leave Siam, the young monarch declared that he would continue his father's friendly policy towards them. He demonstrated his friendship by reciprocating with a missive and gifts to the Prince of Orange—gold-sheathed swords adorned with rubies and various sorts of textiles—and by honouring the departing *Opperhoofd* and

his assistant. De Marees was given a silver betel box which was the insignia of an official of the *okphra* rank, which Schouten compared with that of a European baron. Schouten himself received a sabre in a gold scabbard which was usually given to an *okluang* or *okkhun* which was, in his understanding, a knight or captain in the European system. The letter from the *Phrakhlang* to the Governor-General also echoed the need to maintain good relations with the Dutch: he asked Batavia to send its personnel to trade in Ayutthaya again. At the end of January, apart from a few employees left behind to look after the Company affairs, the VOC men sailed off to the Company ships at the river mouth, accompanied by the royal vessels. They departed in a friendly atmosphere, without knowing that the Dutch would return to see a different King.¹⁷

Two Exhausting Hours: De Roij's Embassy, 1633

When VOC Ambassador Jan Joosten de Roij arrived in Ayutthaya in September 1633, the Dutch-Siamese relationship had entered a new stage. In May, the Company had re-opened its factory in Ayutthaya under the direction of Schouten. Undoubtedly, the arrival of the missive and presents from Prince Frederick Henry helped facilitate the renewed contact. Now, Siam also had a new ruler, King Prasatthong. De Roij's account of the reception of his embassy is no less detailed and fascinating than Schouten's piece of 1628, and also repeats it in many points. It was not unusual that a 'visitor', as De Roij in this case, based his account upon the knowledge of the 'resident'. Therefore, the following paragraphs will present mainly the differences between the two reports, which point to the disparity of characters between their writers, namely De Roij's annoyance with and limited understanding of Siamese court ritual.

Upon his arrival, De Roij immediately transgressed the local diplomatic protocol when he carried the princely missive from the vessel to the VOC lodge himself. The Dutch had to return it to the ship in secret, from where it was soon collected with great honour by the Siamese officials.¹⁸ During the transportation of the missive to the royal palace by a ceremonial flotilla, the Dutch made another mistake: they fired a salute without the permission of the city authorities. De Roij noted that the Siamese showed their understanding that firing a salute was a Dutch way of showing respect; however, they would have preferred the Dutch not to do so, for the King might be displeased.¹⁹

Prior to the audience of welcome, the information gathering had started on both sides. De Roij reported that King Prasatthong had inquired of his officials about the Dutch embassy, asking such questions as what quality of man was the envoy. The Dutch in their turn learnt from the court interpreter assigned to them, *Okphra Ratchamontri*,²⁰ that the

King was very pleased with the harquebus sent by the Stadholder but wondered why the cuirass had no gold on it. The Dutch were told that, in Siam, a gift without gold was considered 'un-royal'.²¹ According to Siamese custom, the monarch gave some money and a piece of cloth 'of low value and with weird pattern' to every envoy sent to him. De Roij deemed this act disrespectful for the Dutch who lacked neither money nor goods.²²

On 5 October, the Dutch Ambassador and the *Opperhoofd* were solemnly received at court. De Roij estimated that about 11,000 to 12,000 persons, nobles as well as commoners, attended the court on that day.²³ He was more enthusiastic about the ceremoniously bedecked elephants than about the poorly armed soldiers.²⁴ De Roij's description of the audience hall and the protocol of the event overwhelmingly resembles Schouten's report of 1628. Yet, unlike Schouten who was familiar with court etiquette, the ambassador was obviously disturbed by having to approach the audience hall in the Siamese manner, moving along with body bent and folded hands, crawling on hands and knees, and performing the gesture of respect towards the King's residence, which he called a 'nasty superstitious reverence'. In the audience, King Prasatthong formally conversed with the Ambassador, concerning the well-being of the Prince of Orange and his vassals, as well as of De Roij himself and Schouten. The King also offered help through his *Phrakhlang* and ordered the *Opperhoofd* to assist the Ambassador and instruct him in Siamese custom, since he was familiar with the country's tradition and was regarded as one of the King's own servants.²⁵

After the audience, some officials told the Dutch that King Prasatthong had never before held such a long conversation with any foreign ambassador. Assuredly, this nourished the hope of the Dutch of his favour. However, in contrast to Schouten's opinion of the 1628 reception, De Roij personally did not make any effort to understand the whole procedure other than describing it as two exhausting hours 'with hard labour, pain and difficulty'.²⁶

On the next day, De Roij was honoured with a special banquet given at the pavilion where the *Phrakhlang* usually received people. The place was carpeted with mats and decorated with painted cloths. The Ambassador and his men enjoyed the meal alone without the participation of any *khunnang* who were prohibited from sharing the food sent for the guests from the court. The meal consisted of dishes in eight copper trays, each of which was divided into forty little silver cups. Four trays contained smoked and fried food, two had all kinds of fruit, and the other two were filled with Thai sweets and desserts. They were served with water and arrack to drink, and all was rounded off with betel. Undoubtedly, the Dutch must have understood that the offering of betel

was ‘the essence of courtesy and hospitality’, which was widely practised in South-East Asia.²⁷

The Dutch Ambassador proudly reported that the missive from Prince Frederick Henry was stored in ‘the most splendid spot of his [the Siamese King’s] throne under a ceiling decorated with gold and precious stones where the gold statues of the late kings also stood, and beside two other missives, namely [the one from] the Emperor [actually Shogun] of Japan and the other from the Emperor of China’.²⁸ Nevertheless, the Siamese court requested that the missive which the Prince of Orange should send to its King should in future be written on a gold sheet as was the one the court was preparing to send to Holland. The Dutch should consider this seriously because, as gold was the most precious and enduring substance of all, the friendship between the Dutch and the Siamese should be ‘eternal and unbreakable’.²⁹

The Dutch and the Siamese gathered once more in the temple of the ‘Former Queens’ to translate the letter from King Prasatthong to Frederick Henry. De Roij was irritated by the ‘unnecessary flatteries and lack of substance’ in the letter. The Siamese ruler wrote to his Dutch counterpart that he would treat the Prince’s servants and enemies as his own. This was more than flattery because Prasatthong also requested their military assistance to suppress rebellious Patani—expecting the Dutch to treat his enemies as their own. This message was to be used repeatedly as an argument by both sides. The King’s reciprocal gifts to the Stadholder included a gold sabre, a gold *kris*, and low-quality velvet. The Governor-General received a gold cup adorned with rubies and some pieces of textile from the King, besides two pieces of damask on the *Phrakhlang*’s account. De Roij was given a silver betel box with little gold cups and some cloth as farewell gifts from the court—this time, he did not consider the gift-giving an insult.³⁰

The Beginning of the Troubles: Schouten’s Embassy, 1636

When the letters and gifts from Prince Frederick Henry and Governor-General Anthonio van Diemen (1636–45) to King Prasatthong arrived in September 1636, there were two major changes. For the first time, instead of sending an ambassador, the VOC now appointed the incumbent *Opperhoofd* to be the official Dutch envoy, offering as an explanation to the Siamese that Schouten was qualified to undertake this task because of his knowledge of the local language and customs. The second change was that this was the first time that a Governor-General displayed his power to the King of Siam through diplomacy.

In an effort to please the Siamese monarch, besides such precious gifts as a crown and a sword, the Stadholder’s missive had been written on a

gold sheet, precisely as the Siamese court had requested. It travelled to Ayutthaya in the company of more than 800 men dispersed over sixteen vessels. Schouten himself escorted it in a long boat under a gilded canopy which the King had granted him three years earlier. As was customary, the VOC lodge was finely decorated with flags and banners. Likewise, the Siamese showed their readiness to accommodate the Dutch way: the Company servants were now allowed not only to sound their trumpets and beat their drums, but also to fire a salute from their lodge, which was reciprocated by their colleagues on the vessels. Moreover, the council of the factory had decided to provide the employees who took part in this ceremony (ten soldiers, a trumpeter, and a servant) with new clothes which they could also wear to other court events.³¹

The audience of welcome was as solemn as ever. The princely missive was customarily displayed in a gold container, while the letter from the Governor-General was placed in a smaller vessel at a lower position. The distinction in prestige between the two was made palpably clear. Schouten wrote that King Prasatthong, wearing a magnificent costume and a crown, appeared like 'an earthly god'.³² This shows that the Siamese court protocol indeed achieved the desired effect—to create the impression of the divinity of its ruler and to distinguish him from the world of mere mortals. Schouten assured the Governor-General that his embassy had been very welcome because the King granted him betel in 'a gold vessel'.

During the audience, the Thai version of the missive from Prince Frederick Henry was read aloud. Tactfully, those parts in the letter from the Governor-General, in which he complained that Siam had failed to keep its promise to deliver rice to Batavia in the previous year and addressed the ongoing conflict between Siam and Patani, were omitted because, as Schouten was given to understand, it was court custom to create the impression that Siam was on good terms with other nations.³³ Flying in the face of all his previous experience, the *Opperhoofd* still tried to insert the Governor-General's complaint about the export of Siamese rice into his formal conversation with the King. The *Phrakhlang* obstructed his attempt on the grounds that it was not the custom to make complaints during the welcoming audience.

In his above-mentioned letter to King Prasatthong, Van Diemen explicitly accused the King of having failed to provide Batavia with an adequate supply of rice with the consequence that 'the city of Batavia very nearly came to be gripped by famine, which is ... a matter completely at odds with our long-established friendship'. The accusation went on: '[it] reluctantly leads us to conclude that Your Majesty has acted against the duty of friendship, and this to such a degree that it seems as if it was Your Majesty's intention to weaken our city through famine and want'. Less

than tactfully, Van Diemen emphasized that the VOC had found other sources of rice which freed Batavia from its logistic dependence on Siam. This message had caused astonishment among the *khunnang* at the translation ceremony and also had astonished King Prasatthong during his council meeting.³⁴

Having overstepped the bounds of propriety, Schouten was faced with difficulty in obtaining a farewell audience with the King, so much so that he thought that the Siamese intentionally avoided setting a date. Should Schouten be in a rush to depart, the *Phrakhlang* said, he could neither give him a solemn farewell nor prepare the return letter and presents for the Prince of Orange. At the same time, the Dutch were informed that the Ambassador from Bengal was due to receive a farewell audience from the King. Consequently, they felt that the present *Phrakhlang* did not have their interests at heart. Schouten pointed out that with the help of the Minister's predecessor, De Roijs embassy had been able to return to Batavia within a month. Under these circumstances, the Dutch fell back on two typical explanations: either it was the Minister's personal sluggishness, or the King's intention not to reciprocate with precious tokens. Schouten may have drawn the latter conclusion from his negative experience the previous year. Then, he was told by some 'good friends' of the Company that, in refusing to give him—who was leaving for Batavia—a farewell audience on the grounds that he was no envoy but a resident, King Prasatthong hoped not to have to reciprocate the gifts of the Governor-General.³⁵

When it was all said and done, the Bengali envoy was not granted any audience, and the Dutch believed that the court might have felt their resentment. To avoid 'loss and disgrace', Schouten and his council decided to press for the farewell audience because they wanted the Siamese court to show respect to the Prince of Orange and to reciprocate in gift-giving; were this not so, the Company would have incurred a loss on its investment in the gifts to Prasatthong.³⁶ Having given up hope of winning the *Phrakhlang's* favour, the Dutch tried to obtain help from other officials, such as Okya Uthatham (the King's 'Chamberlain'). They finally found the right man in Okphra Alak (the King's 'Secretary'), with whose help the missive from Prasatthong to Frederick Henry was issued within a short time. This was only half the battle. Translating it turned out to be another challenge. In the preamble to the missive, Schouten, who was undoubtedly experienced with Siamese State letters, believed that there were many unfamiliar, unconventional words and even words in the Siamese 'ecclesiastical language' (Pali), which he unfortunately did not specify but considered 'utterly arrogant'. It seems that the missive and presents for the Prince of Orange were sent to Batavia only after Schouten's departure.³⁷

For the Dutch, this episode may have been another instance of proof of Siamese 'laziness' and 'greediness'. However, with all his experience Schouten himself must also have realized that something had gone wrong in the Dutch-Siamese relationship when he reported to Van Diemen that King Prasatthong was better pleased with the gifts than with the letter from Batavia.³⁸ In contrast to the Prince of Orange's attempt to gratify the Siamese King with a gold-engraved missive, Van Diemen's letter may have offended Prasatthong and made him aware of the changing, increasingly self-confident attitude of Batavia. The monarch now showed the undisguised sign of his disfavour by refusing to grant Schouten a formal farewell as envoy. Yet, the full impact of the Governor-General's affront to Prasatthong was to be felt, soon after Schouten had left Siam, by Van Vliet and those who remained behind in the 'Picnic Incident' of December 1636.³⁹

In 1638, another letter from Van Diemen again outraged King Prasatthong, because its contents criticized the King's actions in the 'Picnic Incident' and the declaration of responsibility imposed on the Dutch in Siam and even suggested that the Governor-General was thinking of 'mending the disgrace in Siam'. Reportedly, the King said that not even an enemy had ever treated him so harshly, and that it was almost intolerable that the Governor-General, who was 'a mandarin of the Dutch King', had sent him such a threatening message and instructed him how to rule his kingdom. From the *Phrakhlang*, the Governor-General demanded free sale of all imports brought into Siam by the VOC, and the exemption of the Company employees from the Siamese 'servile law' and the King's judicial power.⁴⁰ For whatever motives, Prasatthong decided to tolerate this second affront. According to his courtiers, he chose to take the harshness of the letter as an 'honest' expression of the Governor-General's dissatisfaction and a reflection of his problems with Siam. He also read the return of Van Vliet with these letters and gifts as a sign that Batavia had no real intention of doing Siam any harm. For the sake of the long friendship with the 'King of Holland', Prasatthong received the Dutch letter and its bearer, Van Vliet, as part of the ceremony of the oath of allegiance. The *Opperhoofd* emphasized that no foreign envoy had ever enjoyed the privilege of attending this ceremony.

King Prasatthong may have tried to be conciliatory because he wanted to avoid a confrontation with the VOC military power, or because he did not want to lose the Dutch partnership in trade, especially their direct access to Japan which Siam had lost after 1636. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, in 1640, his low level of tolerance snapped and he almost had all Company men in Ayutthaya killed.

The Benefit of an Unaccomplished Mission: Van Vliet's Embassy, 1641

In 1641, yet another missive and gifts from the Prince of Orange to the King of Siam arrived in Ayutthaya under Van Vliet's supervision. The first attempt to take the missive into the city was halted halfway and postponed until the following day because on that very morning the court astrologer had deemed the day inauspicious. King Prasatthong sent twenty cannons to the VOC lodge with which the Dutch were to fire a salute when the Prince's missive passed by their settlement. As had Schouten and De Roij before him, Van Vliet recorded a favourable impression of the overall splendour and honour with which the missive was collected.⁴¹

To avoid any dissatisfaction, the VOC men in Ayutthaya, who must have been sick and tired of the tensions caused by Batavia, had decided to soften the tone of Van Diemen's letter to the King in the translated version, probably with the support of the Siamese officials. Nevertheless, they maintained the original content of the letter to the *Phrakhlang*. While complaining that the King and the 'greedy' Minister regarded the gifts from Batavia, which consisted of 'paintings' and 'painted elephants', with indifference, the council in Ayutthaya decided to rescue the reputation of their Batavian superior by adding more presents on his behalf.⁴² This embassy marked an important turning point in the relations: Prince Frederick Henry wrote to King Prasatthong that he would like to stop their correspondence because their kingdoms were so far apart, and because the Governor-General had sovereign powers in Asia.⁴³

Through a combination of circumstances, such as the King's progress to Wat Thepphachan at Nakhon Luang (north of Ayutthaya) and the 'incompetence' of the *Syahbandar* and *Phrakhlang*, Van Vliet and his two assistants, Reinier van Tzum and Isaac Moerdijck, were admitted to the audience only on 29 October—almost a month after the arrival of the letters and gifts. During the standard conversation with the King, Van Vliet did not forget to inform, or rather remind, him that the Dutch had conquered Malacca. King Prasatthong behaved very courteously conversing with the assistants, too, even addressing them by their names. Apparently with more appreciation of the material splendour of the court than its protocol, Van Vliet, who had been impressed by the magnificent reception of the princely missive, now described this audience as the 'flattery practice' of the court.⁴⁴

Evidently, Van Vliet gave up hope of or simply made no effort to obtain Prasatthong's reciprocation to the Prince of Orange. The King's unwillingness to reciprocate may also have taken its cue from the Prince's intention to stop their correspondence. More importantly, the *Opperhoofd* concentrated on pressing for a return letter and gifts for the Governor-General. Finally, King Prasatthong conceded by giving Van Vliet, but him

alone, a farewell audience, and sending a letter and return gifts to the Governor-General, which, including an elephant, exceeded the total value of the gifts from Batavia.⁴⁵

Having achieved this small diplomatic triumph for the Dutch, Van Vliet re-assessed the benefit of the diplomatic exchange with Siam. He reasoned that maintaining direct contact between the Prince of Orange and the Siamese King was essential to win the latter's favour for the Company. The downside was that arranging an embassy to accompany the Prince's letter not only burdened the Company financially but the respect of the Siamese for the Stadholder also undermined the position of the Governor-General in his relations with the Siamese King. Notwithstanding Van Vliet's previous attempt to explain the 'kingly authority' of the Governor-General—to wage war, conclude treaties, and administer justice,⁴⁶ the Siamese King regarded the Prince of Orange and not the Governor-General as his equal. Van Vliet believed that the King and his courtiers thought that Batavia was so much obliged to preserve the good relations between the Siamese King and the Dutch Stadholder that it would not dare use force against Siam. He also felt that it was this conviction which had encouraged the King to terrorize the Company men in his kingdom as in the incidents of 1636 and 1640, which he lived through.⁴⁷

Finally, on 28 December 1641, Van Vliet and his party left Ayutthaya without the return letter and gifts for the Prince of Orange. His concluding evaluation of the embassy read: 'In my opinion, the King's silent answer [to the Prince of Orange] is the greatest benefit that the Company derived from this mission.' The Company men in Siam expected that, given his 'avaricious nature', King Prasatthong would drop sending return gifts to the Stadholder altogether. Van Vliet recommended to Batavia that, in order to delay the King's answer to the Prince of Orange—should there be one—even longer, the Governor-General should not send letters to the King and his Minister in the coming year (that is 1642). The Dutch expected Prasatthong to be too arrogant to initiate another exchange of letters and gifts himself and, therefore, would wait for Batavia to take the first step. In this way, Van Vliet believed that Siamese pride would be dented and the Company could save some expense, at least for a while.

Though keen on hurting Siamese pride, Van Vliet still remained fairly realistic. For a more immediate reason it was impossible not to write back to the King at all because Prasatthong sent an interpreter with the VOC ship. Officially this courtier was to arrange papers for the Dutch when they called at ports in the Gulf of Siam and Patani as well as to deliver the court's letters to the High Government in Batavia. Uncompromisingly, the Dutch believed him to be a spy who would report on the reception of

the King's letter in Batavia. Van Vliet took pains to emphasize that, to maintain the relationship, the Governor-General had to keep corresponding with the Siamese court. The letters and gifts from Batavia were to be delivered by the *Opperhoofd* in Siam who, with his knowledge of local affairs, could perform this duty better than some unskilled envoy. As we know, this practice, which in effect enhanced the status of the *Opperhoofd* in Siam, had already become a norm since 1636. Van Vliet also recommended Batavia send only a short letter containing formal compliments and references to the time-honoured friendship, but refraining from mentioning what commodities the VOC needed from Siam because to show such dependency would, again, only inflate 'Siamese arrogance'. Whatever should happen, the Company should continue sending presents or having its men in Ayutthaya occasionally presenting gifts to the King and the *Phrakhleng*. Van Vliet pointed out that, specifically in the case of the *Phrakhleng*, Batavia had to be more flexible in budgeting expenses and to trust the *Opperhoofd* to make a decision on the spot, because the holder of this office could be demoted and replaced by another one as easily as re-appointed, at any time.⁴⁸

The post-1641 diplomacy was conducted strictly between the VOC and the court of Ayutthaya. The Governor-General dispatched letters to both the King and the *Phrakhleng*. Van Diemen's demand of 1639 that the King of Siam should write to him personally was not fulfilled. As a rule, the Siamese King did not write to anyone who was not his equal—a prince thus—but corresponded through his *Phrakhleng*.⁴⁹ Van Vliet's above-mentioned proposal only endorsed the already visible trend in the diplomatic practice of the High Government of Batavia which, by dropping the part of the Prince of Orange, sought both to downsize its diplomatic obligations and to strengthen its standing among the Asian rulers. In fact, not only the Siamese but even the formidable Japanese authorities were made aware of Van Diemen's Bataviacentric diplomacy.⁵⁰

Siam's Asian Diplomacy: Dutch Observations

Since the Dutch initially hoped to profit from the connection between Siam and China, it was not surprising that one of the earliest mentions of Siamese foreign relations in Dutch records concerned China. Also from Siam's experience, the Dutch realized that the only way to get access to the China trade was to use an embassy. In 1617, Van Nijenrode wrote from Ayutthaya:

[A]s much it concerns [the participation in] the China trade, I insist on my previous opinion, [that] it certainly cannot be obtained, according to all Chinese who understand the affairs of China, unless it is requested by means

of an ambassador with credentials and appropriate presents. Without asking for [permission to] trade, the ambassadors have liberty [to trade] and at [their] will, the traders can obtain enough goods. The Siamese ambassador makes such a journey [to China] usually [every] two years ... Yearly, the [Siamese] junks come over and one remains behind to wait for the ambassador's arrival. When he departs, both junks go with him.⁵¹

Later, Van Vliet wrote that by tradition the King of Siam had the right to send an embassy to Canton 'yearly', under which pretext he could have traded there, but 'by pride and arrogance' he had failed to seize the opportunity. While the Siamese may not have needed to send tribute yearly, this was certainly incomprehensible for the Dutch who still sought to improve their access to China.⁵²

In 1634, Prasatthong's court was considering sending an embassy to Japan for the first time. Diplomatic relations between the two countries, begun only in 1606, had been suspended since his usurpation in 1629 because the Shogunate refused to recognize his legitimacy. Through the intermediacy of some officials, a certain group of Japanese merchants urged the Siamese court to send envoys to re-establish the relationship with their home country, in the hope of a revival of trade. If this could not be achieved, they would rather leave Siam and invest their silver-based capital somewhere else!

Being aware of the VOC presence in Japan, the Siamese officials consulted Van Vliet about the possibility to follow up this request. The *Opperhoofd* first emphasized that this embassy would have a financial implication: the gifts required by the Japanese Government had to be worth at least 2,000 catties of silver. Furthermore, he suggested, while sending the embassy in the name of King Prasatthong would make Siam look inferior to Japan, envoys sent in a minister's name only might not be accepted at all. Personally, Van Vliet considered this advice to send an embassy to Japan a ruse of the Japanese merchants who hoped, in this way, to raise capital from their Chinese and Moor counterparts in Ayutthaya, which would enable them to load their ship with sappanwood and dispatch it to Japan. Should the embassy succeed, much honour would accrue to these Japanese. But if it was rejected by the Japanese authorities, they would say that they had been forced into it by the Siamese court. In trying to discourage Ayutthaya from attempting to revive its contacts with Japan, Van Vliet was playing with what he perceived to be characteristic of the 'arrogant' and 'avaricious' King Prasatthong: the sense of (diplomatic) pride of the Siamese King and his concern about the high cost of an embassy. Perspicaciously, he also reported that the *khunnang* rather suspected that the Dutch answer was not totally unselfish because they themselves were engaged in the trade between Siam and Japan. In the end, King Prasatthong still decided to

send an embassy to Japan in that year, but, like all other six which followed it, it was not received.⁵³

In March 1639, the embassies from Pegu⁵⁴ and China (the latter came aboard a Siamese royal junk sent to Canton in 1635) arrived in Ayutthaya around the same time. Peking sent a gold-engraved missive and the gifts consisting of gold, pieces of silk, and cloth woven with gold thread, were valued at 600 reals-of-eight altogether. After a translation ceremony at court, clearly proudly, Van Vliet reported that the letter from China was placed in the very same sacred chamber which also held the missives from Holland.⁵⁵ The presents from Pegu included a beautiful horse with saddle and bridle, some rubies, and cloth, with a total value of 800 reals-of-eight.

Van Vliet commented that the arrival of the embassy from Pegu delighted King Prasatthong greatly, 'partly because, by the arrival of the embassy, his greatness stands out even more in the eyes of his mandarins and subjects, and partly because His Majesty has never been able to ensure the friendship of the Peguan, which he believes now is definite'. Burma had defeated Siam in 1569 and virtually accepted the reality of its independence only by the early 1630s.⁵⁶ In 1637, the King of Pegu had sent an embassy to ask for Siam's assistance in deterring the threat from neighbouring Ava. While receiving this embassy warmly, the Siamese court still suspected that the plea for help might be a trap set by Pegu and Ava to lure Thai troops out of Ayutthaya so that their united force could march to attack the unguarded capital. Van Vliet had then concluded that relations between the Kings of Siam and Pegu were not harmonious and yet they did not possess enough strength to wage war on each other.⁵⁷

The Ambassadors from Pegu and China were given a splendid audience by King Prasatthong at the same time. Van Vliet noted that the dialogues between the King and both Ambassadors were arbitrated by the *Phrakhlang*, who actually presented the answers from the envoys in the way the King liked to hear and to have this heard.⁵⁸ Certainly, it should be borne in mind that the Dutchman could not possibly understand what the envoys actually said, and that he, too, heard what he wanted to hear. Although Van Vliet emphasized that both embassies were received in the same manner, he particularly drew the attention of his readers to the contents and style of the missive from the King of Pegu to his Siamese counterpart, which he deemed to be full of 'foolish, conceited titles and unearthly compliments'. The message, which, fortunately for us, irritated Van Vliet so much that he recorded it in detail, read:

That the Burmese and Siamese Kings both possess the greatest, noblest, and most outstanding lands in the world,
that the one rules in the east where the sun rises, and the other in the west where the sun sets,
that they both incorporate the divine might and, therefore, are illustrious

and invincible,
 that they both are all-powerful who possess the power over life and death,
 body and soul,
 that, like the throne of the Burmese King is ornamented with rubies and precious stones, the one of the Siamese King is woven with gold,
 that they both are brothers who are bestowed with red, white and round-tailed elephants, the carrier animals that are given to no other kings on earth,
 that they both possess the sword of dread and thus are always triumphant over their enemies,
 that they both are the most beloved kings among their vassals and are worshipped like the sun at its height of the heaven with joy and pleasure as immortal gods,
 that all these dignities are given to them by gods and by law, regarding the holy duties and services that they do for their gods, such as to lay on a feast, to distribute alms to the clergy, to renovate and build the temples and statues.

Furthermore, the King of Pegu expressed his wish to continue to maintain the monkhood and build temples and other religious monuments to the glory of Buddhism. He also urged the Siamese King to do the same, promising that in doing so their friendship would grow and they would remain allied.⁵⁹ Ironically, reflecting on their common ideas of kingship, such a message of passionate friendship and fraternal affection was part of the centuries-long power struggles between the Mon and Burmese rulers and their Siamese counterparts.

The brutal fact that the immunity of foreign envoys was not honoured in Siamese conceptions of such matters was evident to the Dutch. They saw King Prasatthong have an ambassador and his deputies from the Sultan of Aceh, whom the King of Siam usually treated as his equal, thrown into prison. As Van Vliet understood the matter, this Ambassador had caused a misunderstanding between the two rulers by giving his master false hope that the Siamese King was willing to give his daughter in marriage to the Crown of Aceh. The *Opperhoofd* complained that the Ambassador was kept in Ayutthaya against 'the law of nations' (*het recht der volckeren*) which was still a very new concept then. He referred here to the concept of the immunity of diplomatic representatives, which had been emerging, yet not fully codified, in Europe as a universal agreement.⁶⁰ As he was forbidden to leave the city, the Ambassador suffered such poverty that he had to sell his gold sword and even his valuable clothes in order to sustain himself and his suite. After all his means had run out, he sent his servants to beg the Dutch for help. The Company men gave him some charity and allowed him to keep the worn-out clothes he had offered in return for a loan. When the Ambassador wanted to visit the Dutch, the latter refused to receive him because they were afraid that King Prasatthong who, they believed, kept surveillance over everyone, would suspect Dutch intentions by having contacts with his 'prisoner'.

The Dutch suggested the Ambassador should come along with the *Syahbandar* of the Malays and the Company interpreters in order to prevent any suspicion.⁶¹

On the lowest rank of the Siamese diplomatic hierarchy were the states within the region which Ayutthaya considered its vassal states. The Dutch seemed to have had an adequate knowledge of Siam's tributary relations. As mentioned before, Schouten reported that around twenty to thirty silver and gold flowers were displayed beside the presents from the Prince of Orange during the reception in 1628. He understood that these tokens represented the number of polities subject to the King of Siam, and went on to explain that the golden flowers represented the kingdoms and the silver ones represented the smaller lordships. He also remarked that the envoys from Kedah, who were sent by their Sultan to show their submission to the Siamese King in return for protection after their kingdom had suffered an invasion from Aceh, were placed on seats even behind those of the Dutch on that occasion. Schouten also explained that King Songtham did not speak to them because such was the convention of treating envoys from the inferior rulers, especially those from the tributary states.⁶² His explanation may be only half-true, because the King of Siam spoke—through the *Phrakhlang* and interpreters—to these envoys as part of the protocol when they presented him the tributary gifts. Even so, they certainly were made to feel their inferior status.

In August 1636, the Ayutthayan court gave a warm welcome to Mukhtar Beg ('Mochterbeecq' in Dutch records), who was sent by the Nawab of Bengal (then a governor under the Mughal Empire) with a letter to King Prasatthong, although he was actually 'merely a merchant'. The aim of this mission was to procure fifty Siamese elephants, which, though expensive, were considered of a good breed and esteemed among the Indians.⁶³ Because the Bengali 'merchant-envoy' was treated significantly better than the 'ambassadors' from Patani who arrived around the same time, Van Vliet assumed that the gifts from Bengal were more impressive and King Prasatthong saw more profit in Indian cloth than Patani pepper. Despite the strong presence of Moor elements at court, Van Vliet did not pay any more attention to the relations between Siam and the Indian states because 'the [Siamese] friendship with these [Indian] governors did not influence matters of state and was only kept up to accommodate trade'.⁶⁴

Siam's European Diplomacy: The Dutch and the Portuguese in 1639

As mentioned earlier, the Dutch had taken the place of the Portuguese as the most prominent European nation in Siam in the mid-1620s. During

the 1630s, their 'decade of disasters', the Portuguese lost several more positions in Asia to the VOC.⁶⁵ To compensate for the loss of the Japan trade, Macao was now looking to improve its chances elsewhere, including in Ayutthaya. Meanwhile, King Prasatthong's policies towards the Dutch and the Portuguese had changed. The reconciliation between Ayutthaya and Patani which began in 1636 reduced the King's reliance on Dutch help, but the rising demand of the VOC and Van Diemen's behaviour disenchanted him.

In 1636, King Prasatthong released the Spanish and Portuguese who had been imprisoned as a result of the *Cleen Zeelandt* incident of 1624 and sent them back to Malacca and Manila with his envoy Okkhun Raksasamut (Francisco Alveros). Schouten remarked that this action was motivated by the King's desire to reconcile himself with the Iberians because friendship with the Spaniards in Manila and the Portuguese in Macao would be beneficial to his ships' passage to China, Japan, and Coromandel.⁶⁶ Van Vliet commented that Prasatthong may have been displeased that the VOC had recently re-opened a factory in Cambodia whose King was rebelling against him.⁶⁷

In early 1639, the Siamese King sent another envoy to Malacca, which unfortunately was then under Dutch siege. Even so, when his attempt became known to Macao, its Captain General, Don Sebastião Lobo da Silveira (1638-45), decided to send an embassy to Ayutthaya.⁶⁸ Under these circumstances, in 1639 the visit of a Portuguese embassy from Macao turned the Siamese court into a virtual battlefield between the Dutch and the Portuguese.

On 9 April, the embassy from Macao arrived in Bangkok and was quickly permitted to enter the capital five days later, and its ambassador, Captain Francisco d'Aguiar Evangelho ('Gaelwansele' in the Dutch account),⁶⁹ was warmly received by King Prasatthong sixteen days later. The Portuguese galleon was allowed to lie at anchor in front of the city, just opposite the Dutch factory, while a provisional residence was built for the Ambassador.

The VOC employees were immediately informed about this arrival by the Siamese officials, and were given rough details of the cargo which the envoy's vessel had brought in. At first, *Oppeerhoofd* Van Vliet showed no alarm because he expected 'neither honour nor profit from the Portuguese'. When he heard that King Prasatthong was very pleased with the visit, especially with the fact that an ambassador had come, he felt that the King 'was fancying' big business with the Portuguese in the future. The *Oppeerhoofd* used the pretext of illness not to have to attend the reception of the letter from Macao, probably in order not to pay honour to the Portuguese presence.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, Van Vliet paid special attention to the contents of the

Portuguese letter, which he obtained from Okphra Ratchamontri. The letter read that by the command of the Viceroy in Goa, who acted in the name of the King of Portugal, the Captain-General of Macao expressed the desire to re-establish contact with the Siamese King and gratitude for the release of the Portuguese and Castilian prisoners. Furthermore, he asked the King to listen to the special requests which his envoy would present. Again, the Dutch quickly learnt of these requests, which partly concerned them, through their informant. The essence of this mission was contained in the four capital points that the Ambassador put before King Prasatthong through the *Phrakhleng*. First, the Franciscan priest who came in his company asked to be allowed to remain at his own cost and to be given the right to practise his religious belief in freedom and have access to the court.⁷¹ This was obviously an attempt to re-install a Portuguese agent at the Thai court, since the Portuguese priest had been denied access to the King and the important officials after the 1624 incident.⁷² Secondly, the Portuguese merchants who came to Ayutthaya in future should be granted the freedom to trade and travel in Siam; King Prasatthong should grant the Ambassador a licence to ensure this. Thirdly, the Portuguese asked for another legal document in which the taxes and duties their men from Macao were obliged to pay in Siam should be specifically indicated, listing how much they had to pay to whom among the Siamese officials. The Portuguese seemed to be knowledgeable about the 'system' of the Siamese bureaucracy and tried to find a solution to deal with it. Up to this point, the requests seemed to reflect typical Portuguese interests: religion and trade. The last request, however, was the focal point of the interaction between the Siamese, the Portuguese, and the Dutch, which would be the main point on the agenda for the gathering of 19 May.

While this was happening, Okya Yommarat (Justice Minister) asked the Dutchmen for their opinion of the King's wish to re-establish contact with the King of Ceylon (Kandy). When the *Okya* asked about the best way to transport a Siamese embassy to Ceylon, the VOC men replied that they lacked knowledge of the island especially that related to navigation. Their dissembling was immediately revealed. With his good knowledge of the state of the Dutch-Portuguese relationship, the Minister of cosmopolitan Ayutthaya argued that the Dutch had seized one of the Portuguese fortresses in Ceylon in the previous year (namely Batticaloa) and that the Governor-General was allied with the Kandyan King. He also knew that the Company ships went there constantly. However, to avoid the cost of transporting a Siamese mission, the Dutch were not in a co-operative mood and even suggested that the court make use of the Portuguese galleon which had just arrived from Macao because 'these people [the Portuguese] without doubt sail on that water and live there like in their

own country'. With a smile, Yommarat answered that he knew that this was not possible.⁷³

On 19 May, both the VOC employees and the suite of the Portuguese envoy were summoned to the *Phrakhlang's* residence. Their rivalry was palpable from the outset. The interpreter for the Dutch, Okmun Wichitphasa, took a bribe from his Portuguese counterpart and tried to delay the Dutch progress to the gathering. But Van Vliet and his men, aware of that trick, took another path and reached the destination even before their rivals. At the ministerial residence, a company of the *khunnang* commissioned by the King to observe the meeting was waiting. The gathering was entertained by court musicians and singers. The Dutch immediately complained about the trick the interpreter had played to allow the Portuguese to arrive ahead of them, thereby making the Dutch look inferior. The Portuguese entourage, which Van Vliet described as being 'rather comedians than merchants', was obstructed on their way by many curious bystanders who were attracted by its musical and visual presentations. Finally, the Portuguese arrived and sat down opposite the Dutch. But then, to the Ambassador's displeasure, the *Phrakhlang*, claiming to be acquiescing in the King's wish, invited Van Vliet to the seat closer to the head of the table.

When both parties were present, the *khunnang* invited the Portuguese Ambassador to start talking to the Dutch, which he declined to do. The same request to the Dutch was also refused. Food and drink provided by royal courtesy came to save the situation, but only for a while. While the Portuguese sat silent, the Dutchmen conversed with their acquaintances. Finally, the *Phrakhlang* asked the Portuguese interpreters to ask if the Ambassador had anything to say to Van Vliet, since this was supposed to be the purpose of summoning the *Opperhoofd* in the first place.

Finally, the Portuguese Ambassador made the first move and mentioned two factors which had discouraged his people from coming to trade with Siam: first, the conflict between Siam and Portugal (and Spain), and secondly, fear of a Dutch attack on their vessels. Now that the first problem had been solved, Dutch hostility was the only obstruction left to the revival of Siamese-Portuguese trade. He said that it was known to the Dutch that the 'Japanese Emperor' had commanded the Governor-General in Batavia and the trade director in Hirado not to attack or obstruct any Portuguese vessels travelling between Japan and Macao, and allowed these ships to depart each year fifteen to twenty days prior to the Dutch ships, so that they would not be pursued or disturbed by the latter *en route*. The 'Emperor' provided this protection because the Portuguese in Macao were just poor merchants with badly equipped ships who sought nothing beyond peaceful trade, and (the trade with) Japan was their sole source of sustenance. Should any Dutch ship violate this

edict, the Hirado factory had to compensate the damage done to the Portuguese. Now, the envoy asked King Prasatthong to forbid the Dutch to attack his people sailing between Macao, Pulau Kondor, and Siam in the same fashion. Since the Siamese King was no less esteemed than the 'Japanese Emperor', the Dutch should obey him as much as they obeyed the Japanese ruler. In short, the Portuguese were asking King Prasatthong to command the VOC in Siam to give a legal assurance that would guarantee the security of their ships.⁷⁴

In their turn, the Dutch ridiculed the discordant behaviour of the Portuguese who had always presented themselves as, in Van Vliet's words, the 'phoenix of the world' and expected to be respected as such, but now asked for favour and help from Asian rulers. Warming to their theme, they accused the Portuguese of helping themselves by painting a false picture of the Dutch and telling lies about the protection of the 'Japanese Emperor'. Here, Van Vliet rightly pointed out that the Portuguese were actually treated badly by the Japanese authorities.⁷⁵ He also insisted that there was no instruction from the Governor-General which prohibited his servants from attacking the Portuguese ships and ordered them to compensate their loss. Lastly, Van Vliet indicated that he had no authority to issue such a legal assurance to the Portuguese and that no Company employees would obey such a command from any Asian ruler. But were the Portuguese to give the Dutch a licence to pass the Portuguese ships along the Indian coasts safely, he promised that he would write to the Governor-General in their favour. The Ambassador answered that to grant such a request lay beyond the authority and concern of Macao.⁷⁶

Having listened to both parties, the *Phrakhlang* finally intervened, relating that King Prasatthong was delighted by the restoration to friendship of the Portuguese and, as the patron of all foreigners in Siam, he also wished to see harmony among them. Therefore, the VOC should not refuse to help realize his wish.⁷⁷ The Dutch replied that they acknowledged the patronage of the Siamese King and praised him for his wish to make enemies friends. However, both parties were traditional enemies because they had waged war against each other for more than seventy years—since the beginning of the Dutch revolt against Spanish rule in 1568. Therefore, even the help of a great ruler could not pacify them. If King Prasatthong wished to have the legal guarantee the Portuguese Ambassador desired, he should refer this matter directly to the Governor-General in Batavia. He should be forewarned that the request would certainly be refused and the Company would rather leave Siam than comply with it. Yet, to make amends for this potentially dangerous stance, the Dutch quickly added they were willing to compromise. In deference to the King's wish, they promised to act in a friendly way to the Portuguese

on land, on the river, and on the coast within the territory of Siam, if the latter were friendly to them, too. At sea, however, where the water was five fathoms deep or more, the Dutch would deal with them in accordance with the rule of war, as enemies, as the Portuguese would treat them.⁷⁸ What Van Vliet offered here was actually pointless because it was no departure from the usual practice. The Dutch would not attack any foreigners in Siam because they had learned well from their experience in 1624 that the King would not tolerate a foreign act of aggression in his realm.

According to Van Vliet, the Siamese officials seemed satisfied with his answers and also naively expected that when the Dutch and the Portuguese treated each other in a friendly manner in their presence, this was a sign of success. They also urged both parties to pay each other a visit. In the end, the VOC invited the Portuguese Ambassador to visit their factory, which the latter first accepted, and then failed to turn up. While the Dutch were not perturbed by this breach of etiquette, a problem arose on the Siamese side. A few days later, the harbour master came to report that, after having heard the report of the gathering on 19 May from the *Phrakhlang* and Okya Yommarat, the King was satisfied with the conduct and the answers of the Dutch. He was not pleased to learn that the Portuguese tried to steal a march by acting deviously and seemed to have abused his goodwill. The King commanded the *Phrakhlang* to investigate why the Portuguese Ambassador failed to keep his promise to visit the Dutch. The envoy argued that since he possessed a higher position and was of superior descent and status as a noble captain appointed by the King of Portugal and as the Ambassador of the Captain-General in Macao, it would be beneath his dignity to pay a visit to the Dutch before Van Vliet had come to greet him. He claimed that he may have been under the influence of the wine served at the gathering on 19 May when he made such a promise, but he had never had the intention of actually fulfilling it. The Siamese officials replied that, having dealt with the Dutch for decades, they had never seen them boast about their descent and status. In his turn, the Portuguese complained that the Siamese were partial to the Dutch.

Unfortunately for the Portuguese, the *khunnang* interpreted this as inappropriate behaviour on the part of the envoy who tried to obtain the favour he requested from Van Vliet by sheer arrogance rather than behaving as one who asked for help usually should behave towards his helper.⁷⁹ The reaction of the Portuguese Ambassador aroused great displeasure when it was reported to the council of officials. So offended was everyone that all, except Okya Kalahom (the Minister in charge of Military Affairs), suggested that the Portuguese should leave Ayutthaya without a farewell audience or without the King's letter. At that moment, when the

letter from the *Opperhoofd* in Jambi to the *Phrakhlang* arrived, his colleagues in Ayutthaya added some lines during the translation process describing the miserable situation of Malacca under Dutch siege in order to undermine the Portuguese image in the eye of the court!

Two days later, upon the Dutch visit to Okya Yommarat, the haughtiness of the Portuguese envoy was again the topic of the discussion. The Dutch suggested that the King and the officials paid this Ambassador too much honour and consequently encouraged his arrogance. They argued that normally an envoy who was sent by a mere governor was not given a royal audience, but at most a reception by the council of officials, and that his letter was answered only by officials of minor rank. The Dutch insisted that it was incorrect that the Siamese court had received this Portuguese embassy from the Captain-General in Macao, a mere local governor, and not from the Viceroy in Goa, in the same way it received an ambassador from the Governor-General in Batavia, who was the counterpart of the Viceroy. Afterwards, the Dutch also recalled that the Portuguese had boasted to them that King Prasatthong himself had first offered peace to Manila and Malacca. This had the desired effect, for it enraged the Siamese who considered the King's friendly message and the release of the Spanish and Portuguese prisoners an 'act of mercy' and not one of submission. Pushing home their advantage, the Dutch suggested that, if King Prasatthong were to offer a personal farewell and send a letter in his name to the Captain-General of Macao, the Ambassador would become even more arrogant. If the King would send a letter to Batavia in favour of the Portuguese, the Governor-General would be displeased because, in his message to the Prince of Orange in 1633, the King had written that he would treat the Prince's enemies, who included the Iberians, like his own.⁸⁰ On the following day, the Dutchmen and Okya Yommarat went to tell the *Phrakhlang* the same story. The furious reaction of the latter was predictable.

Until now, Van Vliet's account points to the precarious situation into which the Portuguese Ambassador had largely manoeuvred himself, and which the Dutch had in part helpfully tried to create for him. Contrary to what the Dutch hoped, the King was still benign to the Portuguese. Prasatthong, whom Van Vliet believed to be 'haughty', 'choleric', and 'quick to condemn',⁸¹ responded calmly to the *Phrakhlang*'s report of what the Dutch said:

The Portuguese are new and have been long absent from here. Our language and customs are not known to them. We should bring them to understand these better with time. We must see that they are like slaves who have run away from their owner and just have come back home by themselves.⁸²

In this way, the King justified his own actions—to indulge and forgive the

Portuguese—by blaming their lack of understanding of Thai culture for the Ambassador's inappropriate behaviour.

On 10 June, the Portuguese were allowed to attend the farewell audience with the King. They were given a State letter by the *Phrakhlang* in His Majesty's name accompanied by precious gifts for the Captain-General. Three days later, the Portuguese went to the *Phrakhlang's* residence to collect the letter and the gifts. To the Ambassador's surprise, however, the letter was translated into Chinese and Malay, but not into Portuguese, even though undoubtedly the Siamese court possessed Portuguese translators. Again, the Dutch proved that they had an excellent information-gathering system at court: they had already learnt from the *Syabbandar* about the wording of the message two days before! When the Ambassador insisted that he be told the content of the letter, the Siamese explained it to him. First, King Prasatthong was very pleased with the renewal of friendship with the Portuguese and he assured them that there was no more disagreement between Siam and Portugal. Secondly, the Portuguese were granted a legal licence pertaining to the payment of duties and taxes in Siam. However, the court did not commit itself to protecting Portuguese vessels from the VOC, which may explain why the court letter was not available in Portuguese. Extremely indignant, the Ambassador asked the *Phrakhlang* what he was supposed to do if a Dutch ship confronted him on his return journey. The Minister's sarcastic advice was anything but helpful: either the Portuguese should deal in a friendly fashion with the Dutch who were, after all, good people or wave a white flag at them. When the envoy persisted in obtaining a guarantee for his countrymen's security, the *Phrakhlang* said irritably that the King of Siam intended to discuss this matter with the Kings of Portugal and Holland, the Governor General in Batavia, and the Viceroy in Goa. The conversation was ended when the Minister closed his door—a sign of disfavour—and left the Portuguese at his wit's end.⁸³

Despite the unfriendly gesture of the *Phrakhlang*, the letter and gifts for Macao were carried to the Portuguese residence as solemnly as those for the Dutch Governor-General would have been. Flying in the face of protocol, however, the Portuguese Ambassador still had the opportunity, even after the farewell audience, to present some further requests to the King. First, he asked that the King should graciously grant the Franciscan father a stipend of four *taels* per month and allow him free access to the court. Secondly, the merchants in the envoy's company should be permitted to remain in Ayutthaya until they had sold all their commodities. Lastly, the Ambassador asked for a loan to buy goods to load onto his vessel for the return journey. The King granted most of these requests. While the Portuguese source states that the King went as far as to ask for Christian missionaries (which was highly unlikely), the Dutch text only

mentions that King Prasatthong allowed the priest to stay in Ayutthaya at his own expense.⁸⁴ As even the *Phrakhleng* found these requests unreasonable because they were submitted after the farewell audience, the Dutch assumed that the Ambassador had found a helpful friend who had access to the King.

The Dutch assumption was right. Okya Kalahom, whom Van Vliet described as a 'friend of foreigners', gave the Portuguese a helping hand at the last minute by carrying their requests to the monarch. The *Opperhoofd* remarked bitterly that the Portuguese were helped even better than the Dutch had been. Actually, the grandee must have been convinced that Prasatthong himself wanted the Portuguese to be helped, because to have defended someone in the King's disfavour would have cost anyone who did so dearly. The Portuguese Ambassador told Okya Kalahom that, if Siam could manage to protect them from a Dutch attack, five or six trading ships from Macao and Manila would call at Ayutthaya every year. Not only that, merchants from Macao would come to open a factory there. The *Okya* promised to report this to the King and to persuade 'his good friends' (the Dutch) to present the problem to their superiors in Batavia. Unperturbed, the Dutch considered this merely lip service on the part of the Siamese.⁸⁵ On 24 July, the Portuguese galleon carrying the embassy sailed down the Chao Phraya River to the high seas to commence its return journey to Macao. Van Vliet's last remark on the episode was that the vessel was so heavily laden that it would be a miracle if it ever reached its destination safely.

Despite such disparaging words by which they chose to designate this Portuguese embassy as 'comedy' and 'comedians', Van Vliet's extremely elaborate report shows that the Dutch were anxious about the prospect that King Prasatthong would ally himself with the Portuguese. The VOC men hoped to 'sabotage' the Portuguese embassy by using their knowledge of the protocol and people of the Siamese court. Although some of the Portuguese requests remained unfulfilled and they had to endure some unfriendly gestures, as described in the Dutch account, the indisputable fact was that King Prasatthong had shown them great favour. Despite his awareness of the Dutch-Portuguese rivalry, he was not ready to be bound by relations with the Dutch alone. He broke with the legacy of hostility against the Portuguese which had come down from King Songtham's reign, obviously because he felt that the Dutch alliance was not reliable. Regardless of his efforts, the renewed Portuguese-Siamese tie did not prosper, exactly as Van Vliet had predicted. After the fall of Malacca, the position of the Portuguese in the eyes of the Siamese court again declined.⁸⁶

Dutch Participation in Siamese Court Ceremonies

It did not take the VOC employees long to realize that ceremony and festivities were an essential part of court and common life in Ayutthaya, including their own. Some *Oppperhoofden* found the Siamese court ritual fascinating, whereas others deemed it tedious. Indubitably, the Dutch and other foreigners were tempted to participate in these expressions of court splendour. Nevertheless, it was a common complaint among the Company men that, almost throughout the entire year, they were, directly and indirectly, obstructed from conducting their work by the preparations for and participation in various court ceremonies and festivities, which absorbed the concentration of the officials as well as the manpower that the Company needed to run its business. It was Schouten who first meticulously documented the impressive details of Siamese court ceremonial. Yet, it was the same man who commented with some irritation on the fact that the Siamese were deeply occupied with all kinds of celebratory activities:

[We] could not obtain any labourer because everyone accompanied the King on his voyage. This month [October or November] is the most inopportune period of the year [for dealing with the court] when the nobles and the common people spend time on making offerings to gods and recreational trips so zealously and uselessly, as if their life and well-being depended on this.⁸⁷

Certainly, the Buddhist Siamese did feel their life and well-being dependent on these activities for they considered them the means to accumulate their merit.

Apart from seeing them as time-wasting and distracting them from their 'real' work, the Dutch certainly also realized the significance of court ceremonies and festivities because they offered an opportunity to have contact with the King and important courtiers. Participation was necessary as a way of returning the host's friendliness and for competing with many other foreign representatives for the court's attention and favour. It was essential that people behaved appropriately and read the signs of favour and disfavour correctly.

To what extent such obligations occupied the time and challenged the wits of the Company men can be seen from Schouten's *dagregister* from 1634. In July, Schouten and Van Vliet were invited by the court, first to attend the reception of the embassy from Bengal led by Mukhtar Beg and then to observe the elephant round-up. In September, the Dutch attended a temple feast and later a celebration in connection with the moving of four famous Buddha statues from Phitsanulok and Sawankhalok in the north to Ayutthaya. In October, the *Oppperhoofd* and his assistant appeared at the farewell audience given to the brother of the King of Kedah who had come to offer obeisance to King Prasatthong. On the

same occasion, King Prasatthong also gave a warm welcome to the heads of the Mon refugees who had fled the war in their homeland.⁸⁸ All were entertained by an elephant fight on the grand square of the royal palace. When King Prasatthong asked Schouten's opinion of this show, he answered diplomatically that it was a 'rare and princely spectacle'. Two weeks later, the court, once more, invited all the prominent foreigners for the 'yearly triumphant feast' given by the King in the 'main royal temple' (presumably Wat Phra Si Sanphet which was situated in the royal palace). Knowing that 'the Siamese officials would appear with great pomp and entourage', Schouten came with his own 'entourage' of Dutchmen, for whom he had asked the court to arrange good seats from which they could observe the King's procession and pay him homage. A few days later, the Dutch attended the farewell audience for the Bengali Ambassador. In early November, Schouten had to decline an invitation from the court to join the King's annual water procession on the grounds that he was occupied with the loading of the Company ships.

For the foreigners at the Ayutthayan court, an 'occasional' reception of an embassy was different from a 'routine' court ceremony because, while the former concentrated on the one particular nation the envoys represented, the latter was a chance for the representatives of foreign communities to compete openly for the King's attention. As an example, on a merit-making trip after King Prasatthong had appeared stately on the back of a fierce elephant, he had his officials ask the Dutch and other foreign envoys what they thought of his regal persona. Mukhtar Beg of Bengal answered that he had never known any monarch who displayed such magnificence. The envoy from Kedah said that Patani was wrong to refuse to submit itself to such a powerful ruler. In his turn, Schouten replied that King Prasatthong 'was more majestic than any previous kings especially because he displayed himself to the people on such a fierce animal as a great ruler'. The Dutchman believed that his own answer especially pleased the King.⁸⁹ Whether his opinion was true is less important than the fact that Schouten showed by his answer that he understood what the message of protocol was—that it was the demonstration of the King's prowess—and how he used that understanding to serve his position by giving the Siamese ruler the satisfaction of knowing that his power was acknowledged.

The Dutch were aware that the King of Siam showed himself outside his palace only sparingly. But they also realized that each of his public appearances was made to impinge well and truly on the consciousness of his subjects. Schouten was evidently impressed by the magnificence of *kathin bok* and *kathin nam*, the solemn ritual of the King travelling by land and water to distribute yellow robes to monks. He estimated that 15,000 to 16,000 people on elephant, horse, and foot accompanied the

King on the *kathin bok* procession; and around 25,000 to 26,000 on boats in the *kathin nam* procession, besides 'an infinite number of People, who reverence and adore their King in his passage, with bended heads and folded hands'. (Failing to do so would have cost them their lives.) It is striking how much manpower was absorbed at each ceremony from the total population of Ayutthaya of about 200,000.⁹⁰

In October 1636, the Dutch were invited to attend the annual merit-making ceremony at Wat Mahathat—also one of the few occasions on which the King appeared in public. To observe the royal procession from the royal palace to the said temple, about forty VOC men were given a convenient place at the corner of the 'biggest' intersection in the city, where they were joined by Mukhtar Beg, who had returned on a second mission, and by other prominent Moors. The Siamese King not only used court ceremonial to demonstrate his own power, but also to show magnanimity to his guests. Schouten reported that King Prasatthong, on elephant back and displaying a friendly countenance, had his elephant stop for a short while at the spot where the VOC men were sitting and performing the reverence to him in the Siamese way, while he watched them 'curiously'. In this kind of encounter, the Dutch must have felt their special position in Thai society. This was enhanced even more because as (foreign) guests of the State they were allowed to look at the King—which was strictly prohibited for the indigenous subjects. Adding to their sense of exuberance was the fact that the sword, which the *Opperhoofd* had presented to the King as a gift from the Prince of Orange, was now borne along by a courtier walking in front of the King's elephant. Schouten indicated that these gestures were signs of special favour to the Dutch nation.⁹¹

In August 1637, the Siamese court again held a ceremony at Wat Mahathat. Van Vliet reported that although King Prasatthong was not going to attend it, he had ordered some Moor merchants to decorate the booths in the vestibule of the temple with costly cloth and other magnificent ornaments. The shopkeepers who came from the neighbourhood were also told to display their most precious goods (unfortunately, there is no indication of what they were). According to the *Phrakhlang*, the presence of the Dutch and the most prominent Moors in the city was required as part of the display of the plenitude and splendour of Siam. This was meant to impress the Ambassador from Pegu who was invited to attend this event. The court also borrowed some 'curiosities' (again, unnamed in the report) from the Dutch to display at the temple. Although Van Vliet had first given a not very enthusiastic answer to the invitation, he, his assistants, and some sailors attended the ceremony in their best attire. Van Vliet described the appearance of the Peguan Ambassador at the temple and (his opinion of) the reaction of the Siamese courtiers:

[T]he Ambassador and his suite came in piously, they went with folded hands around the temple a few times, at different times [they] knelt down in front of the idols [that is Buddha images], offering some flowers, little paper flags, and other bizarre stuff. After they had finished their worship, the Peguan envoy, together with his closest nobleman, was led to the shop of Sediamet [a prominent Moor] by the Siamese guides (who were two miserable haughty persons) who showed him Siamese splendour, which was displayed in the honour of the King (at the cost of the foreigners). We were also shown a place in that shop. This Ambassador and his men appeared to be much [more] polite, than the Siamese guides were. They [the Siamese guides] were penniless noblemen, full of arrogance in their heart but little money in their purse. Their eyes were greedy and wanted to have everything. ... After we had been seated beside these miserable people for a while and secretly observed their haughtiness with disgust, we bade the Moors farewell without having talked to these high officials or them speaking to us.⁹²

Van Vliet's depiction of the 'greedy' and 'arrogant' Siamese as opposed to the ceremony-conscious and humble Peguans fits in well with his general perception of the 'avaricious' court of Ayutthaya and its King who owed (part of) his splendour to exploiting foreigners. Foreigners were often asked to make a social contribution to support court activities, such as a merit-making event as in this case, the renovation of temples and many more such events. Here was a clear difference of view between Van Vliet and Schouten. The latter usually portrayed State ceremony and festivities in Siam as an opportunity for the court to display its goodwill towards foreigners. Even so, Van Vliet's account tells us that foreign elements, materials, and persons, were a source of Ayutthaya's court splendour.

In August 1637, the VOC men were again invited to participate in the trip to worship at several temples around Ayutthaya. At first, they excused themselves, claiming that the act of worshipping idols contradicted their belief. Their objections soon vanished when the *Phrakhläng* gave the pragmatic reason that their participation would be 'for the satisfaction of the King and not the Siamese god'. Their consciences apparently clear, Van Vliet and about thirty Dutchmen joined the excursion. They first assembled at the *Phrakhläng*'s residence, where the cosmopolitan character of Ayutthaya was on full view. There various important officials were waiting, such as Okya Yommarat and Okphra Chula, some prominent Moors, especially the said Sediamet and Radje Ebrehem, and the Makassarese captains ('nachodas'), besides important figures from the Malay and Portuguese communities. Yet, Van Vliet emphasized that he was invited to sit next to the *Phrakhläng*. The Minister told the *Opperhoofd* that he had prepared four of his best horses for Van Vliet, his deputy Van Tzum, and the two Moors, to show that the Dutch were among the foreigners whom he esteemed most—which without doubt included the Moors. At the same time, he asked the Dutch to co-operate by walking in a proper order so that he could constantly keep an eye on them. When they were

entering their first destination, Wat Mahathat, the Minister allowed all the Dutchmen to go in and gave them seats as good as those given to Sediamet and Radje Ebrehem. After all, a person's position at a court ceremony was important as it revealed the status of the person or the community which he represented in the eyes of the court. The Dutch themselves often used the Portuguese as a point of reference for their self-positioning. In the aftermath of the fall of Malacca, Van Vliet pointed out that the Dutch were allotted better seats than the Portuguese at a court celebration.⁹³

Van Vliet described Wat Mahathat as 'the most beautiful and famous temple in the whole kingdom'.

The tower [*prang*] of the temple suddenly broke down in the year 1632, about August, without being influenced by the weather condition. That was regarded as an omen but the Brahmans and astrologers did not want to reveal their prediction. Since then the said tower was, by the command of the King, rebuilt and was almost complete in 1633, at the height of 200 feet, [but] the whole (which was nicely woven with bamboos and rather strong) surprisingly collapsed again, like in the previous year. However, the work was resumed and completed very beautifully. The whole tower from top to bottom was covered with lead and gilded. Buried in this were many gold and silver [Buddha] statues. And as we heard, so many treasures were buried here (consisting of gold nuggets, coined silver, precious stones and jewels) that if the Siamese Kingdom should be destroyed, this treasure could be spent to rebuild the kingdom.⁹⁴

This description refers to the ancient Thai practice of hoarding precious objects in Buddha statues and the fabric of temples. Van Vliet wrote elsewhere that the Siamese used 'many dead guards'—hence human sacrifice—to protect the hoarded assets, but he also accused King Prasatthong of plundering these secret chambers himself.⁹⁵

Having shown the depth of his knowledge of the history of the place, Van Vliet also described the architecture of the temple and the ritual taking place around it.

The temple is skilfully and curiously built but to relate all the details would require a separate description. The gallery is ornamented with more than 800-900 copper and stone statues, of which some are extraordinary high and the smallest are three feet high. All statues are from the motionless heads to the immovable feet nicely gilded. Apart from that, there are so many small statues that they are almost countless and are put around the big [statues]. The *Phrakhlang* draped the cloth around the neck and chest of all the big statues according to the Siamese custom.⁹⁶

The *Phrakhlang* repeated the same procedure at three other famous temples, which were also skilfully built and superbly decorated. Although Van Vliet enthusiastically described the splendour of these temples, he thought:

[A] considerable sum is consumed pointlessly in this ridiculous (in our eyes) offering. But these lost heathens are so eager and blind in their superstition that they fancy that their prosperity will arise from that offering. In this way, Siam is like a bottomless vessel and will remain so because all the wealth is spent (by the King as well as the noblemen, the rich and the common people) on building and repairing the temples, towers, pyramids and offering to the idols.⁹⁷

Apparently, although Van Vliet's interest in what he observed during the ceremony was genuine, his mindset remained profit-oriented. His opinion echoed the views of his predecessor. Although Van Nijenrode was rather impressed by the religious tolerance of the Siamese, he, too, was disturbed that the Siamese 'waste great sums of money and copious means on their gods, shrines and temples', which was yet 'of little help to them'.⁹⁸ Van Vliet could accept the reason for storing valuable objects in the temples because they were to be used in time of emergency, but the concept of merit-making or investing resources in the next life was more difficult to digest. Likewise, the Abbé De Choisy, who was a French diplomat to Siam in 1685, saw no good in the way the Siamese Kings hoarded gold and silver in their treasuries, instead of spending them, thereby allowing them to circulate in the country's economy.⁹⁹

In 1639, as the year *Chulasakkarat* 1000 (the Lesser Era according to the Thai-Buddhist concept) approached, the Siamese court was occupied with attempts to prevent the arrival of an age of calamity which was believed to begin in the last year of the millennium. King Prasatthong had to solve the crisis by disguising the animal year: he symbolically erased the actual last year of the millennium, *khan* (the Tiger), and replaced it with *kun* (the Pig), which was the first year of the now ending millennium. Consequently, the millennium never reached its end before starting anew. The building and repairing of the temples and other acts of merit-making were intensified during these last years of the 1630s.¹⁰⁰ Some of the ceremonies mentioned in the previous paragraphs were part of this attempt.

To mark the New Year and the new *Chulasakkarat* millennium, King Prasatthong gave a three-day grand celebration which started on 16 April 1639 on the square of the outer court of the royal palace. Van Vliet did not reveal to what extent he actually understood the purpose of the whole thing: Prasatthong's attempt to solve the millennium crisis. What captured his attention during the celebration was how people were treated. He wrote proudly that he and Mukhtar Beg entered the palace immediately following the highest-ranking officials of the *okya* rank, such as Wang, Phitsanulok, Phonlathep, Chakri, Sawankhalok, Kamphaengphet, Sukhothai, and Kalahom. The lower-ranking *khunnang* even followed behind him. Van Vliet did not mention the presence of the leading Moor merchants. Although their masters were the equal of the King of Siam,

the envoys from Lansang and Pegu had to crawl across the whole square, which was about two hundred paces long, while performing manifold customary homages to the King on their way. The fact that the Dutch and the Bengali did not need to do so indicates that different conventions were applied to different groups of foreigners at the Siamese court.

The participants were divided and placed behind the two leading officials, Chakri and Kalahom. The Dutchman and the Bengalis were seated at the very end of the tent of Okya Chakri. As Schouten had been on an earlier occasion, Van Vliet was amazed by the fact that the whole gathering offered obeisance to King Prasatthong in such a silence that 'we (after the instruments paused), among so many thousands of people, heard [only] the birds above our head sing—a thing that seems to be a wonder but [was] very real'. Also, Okya Chakri and Okya Kalahom, two of the greatest grandees in the kingdom, remained immobile throughout, with folded hands and body bowed, although they were sitting so far away from the King that they were actually out of his sight. The *Opperhoofd* thought that this indicated their subjection to or fear of the King. The guests were entertained with various spectacles: acrobatics, dancing, wrestling, fencing, horse-riding, fighting between mounted horsemen and elephants, and duels between elephants.¹⁰¹

Although the VOC men considered a diplomatic reception a necessary part of court ritual, they regarded other Siamese ceremonies and festivities with mixed feelings, fluctuating between fascination and fault-finding. In particular, they may have disapproved of such occasions which served the purposes of a religion other than their own, in this case Buddhism. Both Schouten and Van Vliet implied that they understood that the intention of ceremonies like *kathin bok* and *kathin nam* was to enhance the good fortune of the King and his realm; however, it did not mean that they accepted them as meaningful ways of achieving that goal.¹⁰² Nevertheless, the Dutch reconciled themselves with whatever culturally and religiously motivated objections they may have felt by entertaining the pragmatic idea that their participation was important since it would earn them the King's favour. When the *Phrakhlang* asked for a Dutch contribution to the repair of Wat Phra Si Sanphet, Van Vliet informed him that the religion of the Siamese was different from his own and that the Dutch worshipped neither the (Buddhist) temples nor the gods (Buddha) but that, nevertheless, they would place themselves at the service of the King and the Minister.¹⁰³ Sitting side-by-side in a Buddhist temple revealed that both the Christian VOC men and the Muslim Moor merchants did indeed feel that in order to reciprocate the goodwill of the Siamese King and to maintain his favour they should set aside their own convictions and emotions. In their turn, the Siamese certainly saw through this and benefited from it.

Conclusion

The available accounts by different Dutch observers show that they did not always perceive the same situation in the same way. For instance, although Schouten and De Roij were impressed by the magnificence of the Siamese diplomatic receptions, the former saw the audience with the Siamese King as two hours of honour, the latter believed he had wasted two hours in exhaustion. However, it can be said that the Company men in general spoke the language of Ayutthaya ritual fairly ably, although they often did not understand or agree with the purposes of the ceremonial. Certainly, the language of diplomacy was always flowery, but the Dutch merchants were ready to avail themselves of this and other existing local conventions. They were constantly trying to discover their status in the eyes of the Siamese court by reading the signs of favour towards them which were expressed in each court event; avidly comparing these with how other foreigners were treated. Nevertheless, the Dutch were sometimes disappointed that what they understood to be the correct protocol was not followed. After all, everything, or most things, in Siam was in the power of its King to do, including altering some ritual to suit practical considerations.

Van Diemen's insensitive treatment of the Siamese court in the second half of the 1630s and the omission of the role of the 'King of Holland' in Dutch-Siamese diplomatic contacts were shaped by the need of Batavia to strengthen its political status in Asia and to have control over its own diplomatic affairs. In so doing, Batavia subordinated the necessity of the Siamese King who needed diplomatic prestige for 'domestic consumption' as much as for foreign relations. These changes and the resulting conflicts mostly affected the VOC men in Siam, who were caught between attempts to defend the Company interests and trying to comply with the local rules for their own survival.

CHAPTER FOUR

LEARNING SIAM'S POLITICS: THE CASE OF KING PRASATTHONG

Introduction

As we have seen, the VOC men used court ritual as a tool to recognize and measure the positions of their own and of other foreigners at the court of Ayutthaya. Equally important, in order to understand how the Siamese court functioned and how they should behave in interaction with its members, the Dutch needed to comprehend the interpersonal relations within the court. In this learning process, the Dutch merchants not only learnt about Siamese kingship and court institutions, they also pursued their quest for knowledge about the law, history, and style of administration of the kingdom in order to make sense of this environment in which they were determined to survive.

Although the Dutch court watchers of the first half of the seventeenth century were wont to describe the Kings of Siam as possessing absolute power, they also knew, often from their direct experience, that the control of a monarch was not always absolute. The King's authority was almost constantly challenged by external and internal elements, openly and furtively. King Prasatthong's rise to power and his struggle to maintain it, which was not entirely a unique case for Ayutthaya's history, significantly gave the Dutch a basic understanding of the political culture and reality of the Siamese court.

Theorizing Absolute Rule

Empirically, the Dutch felt the full impact of the pomp and circumstance created in an unceasing attempt to elevate the ruler above the rest of society. Van Nijenrode, the first VOC employee to write about Siamese kingship, mentioned that the King was addressed as 'Lord of lords and King of kings'. Besides remarking that 'the king lives happily in all imaginable worldly pleasures', Schouten regarded 'this reverence better becoming a celestial deity, than an earthly Majesty'. The even deeper impression the King's power made on his subjects did by no means escape the keen eyes of the Dutch. Van Vliet affirmed his predecessor's observation, although such treatment was evidently not to his liking. The titles of the

Siamese King were 'very bombastic and more than [deserved by a] human'; indeed, people did not even dare to mention his name aloud. Van Vliet continued: '[W]hen the king passes, all the people along the roads kneel down, fold their hands, and bend their heads to the ground. This way of greeting comes nearer to superstitious idolatry than to paying reverence to a king.' The sanctity of this ruler even crept into the minds of his people: 'Also one hardly dares to carry a wicked intention in his mind, as they [the Siamese] have the idea (although this is absurd) that there is a Divine Majesty [living] in the king and they for that reason ought not to do wrong [to the king].'¹

To introduce his 'Description of Siam', Schouten 'theorized' the absolute power of the Siamese King as follows:

The Sovereignty and Government of Siam is in the King, a Prince of a Noble and ancient family, who hath been in possession of this Kingdom, and the neighbouring Provinces, many hundreds of years; this Prince is absolute in his Dominions, disposing of War and Peace, Alliances, Justice, Pardons and Remissions'. He maketh Laws without any advise or consent of his Council, or Lords, his will being the rule he walks by, unlesse his goodnesse descend sometimes to counsel with his Mandoryns, them of his Council; these sometimes deliberate upon his Majesties propositions, and present their result to him by way of humble supplication, which he confirms, changes or rejects, as he thinks good. He disposes Sovereignty of all the Dignities and great Offices of his Kingdom, without respect of persons, noble or otherwise, (except some of the Antientest and greatest Families) to such as have or may serve him well, whom he againe deprives of their honours for small faults; so that they are all his Slaves and Vassals, which the Great ones esteem an honour, and put in their titles. The King thus sovereignly disposing of all things, doth notwithstanding nothing without some appearance of reason, and conformity to the Laws of the Kingdom, which however antient, he by his usurped prerogative and power, doth interpret and bow to his Arbitrary will and pleasure.²

Although Schouten and Van Vliet agreed upon the central position of the King in Siamese society and his arbitrary power, their accounts differed on one issue. While Schouten seemed to consider it a matter of fact that the King of Siam acted arbitrarily, Van Vliet did not see Siamese kingship as innately despotic but as developing into absolutism. For a start, he ascribed the role of the original creator of law and the founder of religion to the first King of Siam. Besides considering that Siam was 'an old kingdom, since it is provided with good laws and policies', he believed, 'according to the written laws His Majesty had to consult the imperial council, and where His Majesty used bad judgement, partiality, or exaggeration, the mandarins had the power to check him'. Hence, Van Vliet blamed the deterioration of the kingdom on the violation of the original rules by 'the later kings'.

By the encroachment of many prerogatives the power of the kings became absolute, the laws were bent according to their will and were changed and corrupted to their advantage and pleasure.³

Van Vliet reasoned people believed that, by giving more power and privileges to their King, the other nations would fear Siam more. The problem lay in the fact, as it turned out, that no one any longer dared, for fear of his own life, to contradict the King's decision. So a situation ensued, in which '[t]he king was not there for the good of his community, but that the whole country and the people were for his pleasure alone'. One example was the introduction of new rules regarding taxation and the inheritance law by one of the 'later kings', Ekathotsarot, which benefited the Crown and burdened the commoners most.⁴ This was the same line of argument that had been followed by the Dutch in opposing King Philip II of Spain during the 1570s and 1580s.

Nevertheless, opinions regarding the 'later kings', Songtham and Prasatthong to be exact, differed in the sense that the Dutch tended to idealize the former. Van Nijenrode, who knew King Songtham, argued that although his subjects were slaves to the King, they lived peacefully under his rule. That the Dutch were rather fond of Songtham was the result of the privileges and protection, especially during the 1624 incident, he gave them.⁵ Conversely, Prasatthong's attempts to curtail the VOC privileges in Siam gradually reduced the self-confidence of the Dutch in their position as the most favoured nation of the King of Siam. At the same time, his behaviour in general only confirmed their notion of the absolute power of the Siamese ruler to a mounting degree. As we shall see in the following pages, arbitrary use of power and the urge to exert control were two sides of the same coin when Prasatthong exercised his absolute power.

Van Vliet stigmatized King Prasatthong as the epitome of a distorter of Siamese law. With the seizure of the throne and the killing of the rightful heirs, he also had 'usurped [the] supreme power' of the Government and he did not 'allow anybody [an official] to perform his duty according to the written laws'.⁶ In March 1636, a big 'cabinet reshuffle' took place among the officials of the highest *okya* rank. Van Vliet noted that this important change occurred partly as the consequence of the 'unmerited' execution of the King's former co-conspirator Okya Phitsanulok, and partly in consequence of his generally mistrustful nature. Van Vliet wrote, using Biblical figures to make his superiors understand the unfamiliar situation:

Being the intruding Absalom and no anointed Solomon, he [Prasatthong] allows no one to settle in one's position. He will give the one who holds an office today another [office] tomorrow. At a certain point, he will throw the one who is sitting in the highest position under everyone's feet.⁷

In 1638, Van Vliet wrote that the two former *Phrakhlang* (one of whom became Okya Kalahom who helped the Portuguese embassy in 1639) had been removed from their position because King Prasatthong was 'jealous' that they were popular because of their helpfulness towards foreigners. Another official, who was hostile towards the Dutch, was appointed to this important position instead, not only because he was the brother of one of the royal consorts but also for political considerations. Van Vliet thought this *Phrakhlang* actually was as vigilant as a man in his office should be; however, he was also a lascivious man who knew well that no one dared to complain about his laziness and incompetence because of his connection to the royal family. The Dutch believed, too, that, despite knowing of this official's failure to perform his duty, sometimes even to complete the King's business, Prasatthong still remained loyal to this *Phrakhlang* because he was not as popular as his two predecessors. Van Vliet explained that the King himself had risen from the ranks of the officials; therefore, he was careful not to allow any of his men to gather supporters.⁸

In 1638, when King Prasatthong made another reshuffle of the administration, Van Vliet commented that the ruler did so 'without consulting anyone'.⁹ A similar remark had been made earlier by Ambassador De Roij, who had criticized Prasatthong for being a 'tyrant' because he declared his intention to attack Patani and named the generals 'without consulting anyone'.¹⁰ It was obvious that these citizens of the Dutch Republic and employees of the Dutch Company would almost naturally dislike the idea of one man making a political decision alone. Because of his conviction that the written laws of Siam compelled its King to consult his council, Van Vliet had every reason to accuse Prasatthong of being arbitrary. But for the Ayutthayan court, it was common practice that an official be employed for a task at the King's whim rather than on account of his own expertise. (The obvious exceptions were for example the *Krom Tha Khwa* and *Krom Tha Sai* offices, which required particular expertise and ethnic background.)

Van Vliet was convinced that King Naresuan was the first ruler to make the *khunnang* approach him crawling and lie prone with their faces averted before a Siamese King. But King Prasatthong was 'the first who made the mandarins so slavish that they come to court every single day and are allowed to visit each other in their houses or sequestered places but are not permitted to speak to one another except in a public meeting place'. The monarch would even send his doctor to visit those who excused themselves from routine attendance by pleading illness. Such control also extended to the families of the officials. The wives of the high-ranking *khunnang* were obliged to spend at least half of every week in the court of the queen(s).¹¹ This royal policy apparently had an effect on the interac-

tions between the *khunnang* and foreigners, as the Crown was also afraid of a multi-ethnic conspiracy. In 1637, when the Dutch tried to contact the outgoing *Phrakhlang*, he refused to give them an audience, being afraid of being suspected of any hint of conspiracy. Only later did he agree to talk with the Dutch at a temple feast—a public place. Once, the Chinese *Syahbandar*, Okphra Thongsüe, and some court interpreters were imprisoned because, against the rule, the official had allowed the Dutch to remain at his residence late into the evening, and the interpreters had not prevented this.¹²

Prasatthong's efforts to control the foreigners did not escape the attention of the Dutch, although the court of Siam did not discriminate against foreigners, especially foreign merchants, who contributed to its economy. One way to integrate and keep control of them—as manpower and for their assets—was to include them in the Siamese administrative hierarchy. Shortly after Malacca had fallen into VOC hands, the newly appointed Dutch Governor asked his colleagues in Siam to contribute to the new colony by encouraging 'wealthy merchants' in Ayutthaya to pursue their business in Malacca. In reply, Van Vliet said that he believed that he could not find any wealthy Malays or Chinese in Siam who were ready to take a chance because

all and everyone, whether natives or residents, who possess a little esteem or reasonable resource, are made noble by the King, revered with court titles or marks of honour, and thus so firmly bound to the Siamese court that when they die the Majesty declares himself to be the universal heir of the assets they left behind, which makes a rich king but a poor folk. The destitute Chinese and Malays can, we think, serve neither the Company nor Your Honour [Governor of Malacca] because their [request for] departure will be turned down, because His Majesty much prefers the abundance of population and does not tolerate it when someone leaves his country (which he esteems above all other lands in the world). The Siamese do not travel from their land, except when they are sent out on ships on a short journey or by the king somewhere. But to choose a domicile somewhere else outside the country will never be permitted, also because the common people are mostly bondmen, or at least so slavishly restricted to their masters that, without the knowledge of the court, they are hardly allowed to leave the city for a mile. And with the Peguans, it is even worse, because they are considered lowlier than the Siamese. So that, in conclusion, Your Honour can expect nothing from here.¹³

Contest from Within: The Conflicts of Succession

Whereas none of the surviving indigenous sources sets out rules of succession in Ayutthaya clearly, the Dutch accounts themselves offer information which differs from one another. On the basis of his experience in Siam in the 1610s and 1620s, Van Nijenrode stated that the king's eldest

son had the pre-eminent right to succeed over all other candidates, provided he was older than fifteen years. If this prince was younger, the king's eldest surviving brother would succeed to the throne. A decade later, Schouten and Van Vliet gave a different opinion: they wrote that the right of succession always went to the king's eldest surviving brother.¹⁴ No matter whether they were right or wrong, nurturing these sorts of views, King Prasatthong's usurpation was an irregularity which challenged the Dutch observers to investigate.

Van Vliet devoted one of his works, 'Historical Account of King Prasatthong', written in Ayutthaya in December 1640, to the story of the ruler's rise to power. Although Van Vliet claimed to have collected the information during the time he spent there, I suspect that he once again picked up what Schouten had begun. The factual content of his 'Description of Siam' is also similar to Schouten's. Schouten departed from Ayutthaya at the end of January 1629 and therefore did not witness the power struggles which followed King Songtham's death in that year. However, having known many who were to be involved in these conflicts, he did his best to follow the development of the situation. Later, in December 1639, on his return voyage from the Netherlands to Asia, on board he composed a short report on those violent conflicts of succession and especially the usurpation of Prasatthong, entitled 'The Story of the Unlawful, Cunning and Violent Succession of the Kings of Siam'.¹⁵ Schouten did not explain the purpose of this report. Possibly, he wanted to draw his superiors' attention to his return to their service by impressing them with his knowledge, thereby furthering his career in Batavia. He may have thought that it was important to be able to provide the VOC with information about the reigning King, Prasatthong. After all, Schouten and Van Vliet, who served in Siam around the same time and had been colleagues for many years, were likely to share the same source of information. Broadly speaking, the story-lines of their pieces agree with each other. Yet, Van Vliet gave far more details and flavoured his report with 'European dramatic conventions' of his time.¹⁶ Since the succession conflicts of 1629 have been thoroughly studied by Dhiravat in his doctoral thesis, in the following paragraphs I shall attempt to show only what the Dutch understood to be the nature of the power struggle in Siam.¹⁷

Schouten began his disquisition by observing that, for centuries, Siam and the nations adjacent to it had been ruled by 'successive Siamese Kings', and that 'it happens with such power, respect and honour, as [are given] to only a few rulers on earth'.¹⁸ Problems arose when King Songtham, a 'very good, virtuous, and devout legitimate ruler', who had ruled the kingdom in peace and prosperity for almost twenty years, died and left several contenders for the throne—one brother and 'five' young sons. Schouten and Van Vliet agreed that the late King's brother, Phra

Srisin, should have been the lawful heir. Passing him over, King Songtham had decided to name his eldest son, Chetthathirat (eighteen years old according to Schouten and fifteen according to Van Vliet), his successor out of 'fatherly love' and at the 'instigation' of his first cousin Okya Si Worawong (head of the King's household), the future King Prasatthong. Chetthathirat fared better than his uncle because, Van Vliet says, he received assistance from the influential *Okya* who helped him to secure support from Okya Senaphimuk (Yamada Nagamasa)¹⁹, the commander of the Japanese guards in royal service, who brought his men to join some thousand Siamese under Si Worawong's command. Well aware of what was afoot, Okya Si Worawong made sure that he controlled the communications to and from the dying King Songtham until his death.²⁰

Under these circumstances, Chetthathirat came to the throne by what Schouten labelled an 'unlawful succession'.²¹ Van Vliet gives more details of what happened next. At first, all the officials accepted the new ruler, 'some of them by inclination, others out of fear of his powerful supporters and of the soldiers that the Minister [Si Worawong] had brought into the palace'. Despite the apparent acquiescence, a purge began immediately. Many prominent officials who disagreed with the succession, or had somehow antagonized Si Worawong, were executed, banished, or imprisoned, and replaced by his followers. The victims of the purge included three of the 'most powerful, wealthiest, and wisest' grandees: Okya Kalahom, Okphra Thainam, and Okluang Thamtrailok. They were killed not only because of their opposition to Si Worawong but also because of 'their prominence and wealth'. Some *khunnang* were fortunate enough to be pardoned by the young King. At his own request, Okya Si Worawong took the office of Kalahom, which allowed him to have command of the elephant department (which had a large number of men in its service), and had his brother succeed him in his former position. Furthermore, the *Okya* managed to persuade Chetthathirat to give the confiscated estates of the victims of the purge to those officials, 'who were dependent more on that Minister [Si Worawong] than on His Majesty'.²²

Disappointed and in fear of his own life, Phra Sisin entered the monkhood which was supposed to give him the ecclesiastical protection that a secular ruler might not violate a person dressed in a monk's robes.²³ Senaphimuk, however, succeeded in deceiving the Prince into taking off his yellow robe and entering the royal palace in secular attire. Upon the malevolent advice of the new Okya Kalahom, the King decided to send his uncle into exile with the intention of taking his life later. In Phetchaburi, Phra Sisin was placed in a subterranean pit and left to starve to death. He was rescued from such a wretched end by some sympathetic monks and officials loyal to him. Having gathered many followers and an army of 20,000 men, he declared himself King of Siam. This rebellion

was soon defeated by the stronger royal troops. Phra Sisin was captured and executed in the traditional way, as Schouten rightly understood, reserved only for members of the royal family, namely being battered to death with a sandalwood club so that no royal blood should be shed.²⁴

Having eliminated his uncle mostly with Kalahom's help, King Chetthathirat became irresponsible, dissolute, and negligent so that everything was left to be decided by the council and especially by his mentor. The young King was and did 'all of which served to alienate the affection of the people around him, although no one dared to say so openly'.²⁵ Whereas Schouten asserted that Okya Kalahom performed his duty diligently and that many believed in his loyalty, Van Vliet was convinced that the grandee was only paving his way to power. He was increasing his esteem and supporters among the *khunnang* by the tried and tested means of redistributing offices and presents.

While Kalahom's enemies, including the Queen Mother, planted suspicion in the King's mind, the *Okya's* popularity became unbearable, blatantly displayed when so many officials thronged to attend the cremation of his father, which was arranged 'with greater magnificence than had ever been observed for a Mandarin', and fewer people consequently showed up at court on that day. King Chetthathirat would not tolerate such competition and now threatened to eliminate his mentor. The *Okya* expressed his distress in front of the gathering of the officials; he said he was ready to die but could not let his innocent followers suffer by this unfair decision of the 'tyrannical' King.²⁶ The fear of persecution, which Kalahom brilliantly conjured up, united the officials and they decided to rebel against the young monarch. With his mother, Chetthathirat now suffered the same cruel death that he had ordered for his uncle. Purges and the redistribution of the victim's assets and offices were repeated. Chetthathirat's twelve-year-old brother was crowned King Athityawong. Again, Okya Kalahom assumed control of the affairs of state. Very soon the council of officials decided to eliminate the child-king and invite their own leader to ascend the throne as King Prasatthong. Although Van Vliet thought that Athityawong was 'unjustly sentenced to death', he defended the decision of the conspirators by quoting a Machiavellian principle:

It is better, said Machiavelli, that the wisdom and authority of a single Prince should decide all matters of state, and that he should be a speaking law-maker. The Siamese Mandarins and Councillors, too, were of the view that for the maintenance of the commonwealth it was preferable to do away with the young and incompetent King and to elect the Regent [Okya Kalahom] as King for reason of his manifest wisdom and prudence.²⁷

For the new King, the most urgent task was to entrench the new dynasty. Prasatthong lost no time in making his brother the *Wangna* Prince or the *Uparat*—the highest-ranking *chao* after the King himself.²⁸ 'In order to

strengthen his claim to the throne', Prasatthong also took Songtham's eldest daughter as his wife. He had the mother of King Athityawong, supposedly the most beautiful woman in Siam, cut into two after she had refused to become his consort. Van Vliet also added the story of the unbearable tortures and cruel executions of those who dared to mourn the death of the young Kings and their mothers. The extreme cruelty generated such fear that no one dared to express any kind of lamentation.²⁹ Then, Prasatthong managed to send away his powerful ally, the Japanese Senaphimuk, to govern Ligor and later to get rid of him by means of poison. As a result, the Japanese guards rebelled but were defeated by the royal troops. This had a destructive effect on the Japanese community in Ayutthaya, since the new King now ordered a surprise attack on its members who were eventually forced to flee the city. In the course of his reign, the Japanese would return and enter royal service but none of them was ever to gain the same prominence as Senaphimuk, whose political influence was perceived as a threat and so brought about the downfall of his people.³⁰

On the way to consolidating his power, King Prasatthong stepped on many dead bodies, but one death he was to mourn sincerely was that of his most faithful helper, Okya Phitsanulok. Schouten and Van Vliet seemed to have felt sympathy for this grandee who had served as *Phrakhleng* during the previous reign and was undoubtedly familiar to the Dutch.³¹ Van Vliet alleges that the *Okya's* successful performance in the conquest of 'Lijcoon' (Lampang) in 1632 aroused the jealousy of the *Wangna* Prince. A conspiracy between the King's brother, grandmother, mother, and some 'flatterers' gradually managed to bring Okya Phitsanulok into disfavour. Among other schemes, they had some fortune-tellers spread the prediction that, given his time of birth, Phitsanulok possessed the political potency to pose a threat to the King. In Van Vliet's eyes, this was enough to prompt the 'mistrustful' ruler to eliminate Phitsanulok in early 1636. It was Okya Yommarat, another rival, who put the finishing touch to this conspiracy by making sure that the execution of the grandee took place before King Prasatthong could change his mind. Previously, the King had commanded Phitsanulok to supervise the plundering of Yommarat's house as punishment. Van Vliet remarked that Prasatthong intentionally encouraged friction among his officials—to prevent them from uniting against him.³²

Schouten expressed his regret at the fall of the 'honourable house', which revealed his sympathy with King Songtham's family.³³ Several young sons of King Songtham had survived the initial attempts to eliminate them at the intercession of various people, especially the women of Prasatthong's family.³⁴ We must not forget that King Prasatthong not only married some of Songtham's womenfolk but both men were first cousins

as well. Yet, as these boys grew older, they were perceived as a threat. At least one of them did indeed pose a threat to the King, even though only for a few hours. In December 1642, a teenage son of King Songtham, known as the 'Thasai Prince', led two hundred men to seize the royal palace and declared himself King of Ayutthaya. He failed and was killed by Prasatthong's superior force. In the following two years, the last male members of King Songtham's family were ultimately eliminated. Van Tzum (1641-5), who succeeded Van Vliet, lamented that 'whether it is true or whether it is false, it is always thus, everyday of my stay here, in past as well as in this newly-discovered treason, many people have been burnt, roasted, ... chopped up, and [suffered] other cruel deaths'.³⁵ When it was all said and done, the punishment of the losers had to be violent because it was meant to be a public admonition. Without doubt, the VOC men would not only have heard of but also have had to witness this public terrorization when they went about their business in the city.

Schouten ended his account of King Prasatthong's usurpation as follows:

And although all this clearly proves, [that] this king unlawfully came to the throne by very cunning means and cruel murders and secured his unjustly obtained state (according to barbaric custom) with no less cruelty, it is still worthy of note that in matters of government and well-being of state, he is a wise, prudent and moderate prince, who peacefully possesses his kingdom in prosperity and affluence of the common, and, therefore, deserves an immortal memory.

The evidence that this paragraph was copied almost word for word by Van Vliet betrays that he had access to Schouten's writing.³⁶ At various times Van Vliet had described King Prasatthong in his Company reports and earlier works as a 'tyrant' and a 'drunkard', who at a certain point turned into a 'superstitious' wreck.³⁷ However, he added here that the ruler was 'neither tyrannical nor bloodthirsty, because the judgement has to be made that His Majesty has not condemned anyone to death other than for reasons of state and to secure his Kingdom'.³⁸ Van Vliet conveniently seems to have ignored that Prasatthong had threatened to have the Dutchmen in Ayutthaya killed not only in 1636, but also a mere few months before he wrote this piece—an experience which Schouten had never had. He may have genuinely admired the King's decisions, since they corresponded to his own Machiavellian political morality, which prioritized the interests of the State—a view which Schouten may have shared with him.³⁹ At the same time, he may have found this episode in Thai history and Schouten's account of it an interesting piece to include in a text which was composed to address a European audience used to and even greedy for tales of excessive princely power and, perhaps, expected them to be even more horrendous when

these stories were about the supposedly barbarian despots who ruled the East.

Challenge from Outside: Vassal Rebellions

The Dutch were familiar with the problems of the 'unstable' relationships between Siam and its vassals, since they were sometimes asked to assist Ayutthaya in this matter. The vassal states resisted Thai suzerainty whenever they could, though most of the time only to re-submit later. Upon his enthronement, King Prasatthong was immediately confronted with the revolts in some vassal states, which made their suppression one of the priorities in his efforts to consolidate his power. In 1632, King Prasatthong organized his campaigns against the vassal rebellions, beginning with the northern province of 'Lijcoon'. According to Van Vliet, the King himself led the army to the north in order to 'frighten'—to give a signal to—rebellious Patani in the south. Notwithstanding his success there, Prasatthong expected to meet with a greater challenge in dealing with Patani.

Among the important services Schouten performed for the Company in Ayutthaya was his crisis management in the expedition of Siam against Patani in 1634. The event and its outcome are adequately presented in previous research and partly mentioned in a previous chapter;⁴⁰ therefore, a short account will suffice here. In that year, King Prasatthong asked for naval assistance to bring Patani back under his suzerainty. Schouten tried to ward off the request but was strongly pressured by the Siamese court to acquiesce. Consequently, he went to Batavia to convince his superiors why the Company should help Siam.

To explain why the Dutch decided to commit themselves to King Prasatthong in this matter, previous research has emphasized the aspect of commercial interest—a valid explanation, considering that trade had priority in the relations between the VOC and Siam. Besides expecting commercial privileges from the Siamese ruler, Schouten also saw in this an opportunity to defeat the Iberians in Siam once and for all, particularly since Portuguese Malacca was supporting Patani. He hoped, too, that, as a reward for the VOC's contribution, its *Opperhoofd* or representative would be allowed to attend the gathering of the council of officials. Again a valid explanation, but I shall emphasize two other arguments proffered by Schouten, which may not have corresponded to the interests of his superiors in Batavia but represented his very own understanding of Siamese kingship: these concerned Siam's legitimate rule over Patani and Dutch-Siamese diplomatic relations.⁴¹

As a starting point, Schouten emphasized the right the Siamese King

had exercised over Patani for a very long time. The Malay Sultanate had two obligations towards the King: to show him obeisance annually by presenting the tributary flowers, and to aid him in war by sending its troops. In return, as Patani's protector, the King of Ayutthaya was obliged to confirm as king or queen of Patani the person whom the council of the Sultanate had chosen to succeed. This was the reflection of the broader tradition in which the Emperor of China confirmed the enthronement of the new king in the polities which recognized his suzerainty, including Ayutthaya.

Schouten says that Patani had rebelled against Siam for no legitimate reasons; this is perhaps to say that no violation of their mutual obligations, which he explained above, was committed on the Siamese side. He thought that Queen Ungu had received bad advice from her First Minister, Dato Besar, and had initiated the rebellion under the 'pretext' (which Patani took as its 'legitimate reason') that they refused to submit and pay tribute to King Prasatthong because he had usurped the throne and murdered the rightful heirs. The force from Patani also had attacked Thai territories, Phatthalung and Ligor, and seized royal junks on their way to Batavia. Therefore, Schouten deemed Prasatthong's expedition against Patani justified.

Diplomatic relations between the Siamese and the Dutch were not confined to the pompous exchange of embassies and friendly words alone; they sometimes had the effect of a treaty between States. The Siamese court had reminded Schouten that the Princes of Orange and the Governors-General had promised to help it fight its enemies.⁴² This corresponds to what Ten Brummelhuis asserts, namely that, between the early modern Dutch and the Thai, formal international relations were referred to from time to time.⁴³ The *Opperhoofd* now warned his superiors in Batavia that if the Dutch did not keep their promise, their 'diplomatic credibility' would be undermined.⁴⁴

Unlike in his account of the conflicts of succession of 1629, in this case Schouten did not question the legitimacy of King Prasatthong but accepted his *de facto* rule. Certainly, as the representative of a trade organization, he judged the legitimacy of a regime by its commercial potential and political stability because any change could affect his business. Yet, Schouten's vision went beyond a purely mercantile rationale and included the concept of interstate relations. He also explained the legitimacy of Siamese kingship in terms of its rights to demand its vassal fulfil obligations and demand foreign diplomatic representatives give him what they promised, out of respect for the sacredness of the diplomatic bond.

In the end, the High Government gave Schouten a few armed ships to sail to Patani. When they arrived there, the Siamese troops had failed to take the city and been recalled. Schouten decided to proceed to

Ayutthaya, bringing along some Patani captives who were to confirm to the Siamese court that the Dutch had come to help, though too late. In fact, the Dutch did not directly contribute to the re-submission of Patani. Two years later, the Sultanate was forced to reconcile itself with Siam, for fear of an attack from the ever expansionist Kingdom of Aceh.⁴⁵ But in 1634, King Prasatthong generously rewarded the attempt by Batavia to help by immediately receiving Schouten personally, lifting the barricade around the VOC lodge in Ayutthaya, granting the Company an exclusive right to export animal skins, and a good piece of land on which to build a new lodge, as well as facilitating many other Dutch requests, including that for the right to attend the council of officials. As a result of this involvement, the Dutch substantially enhanced their prestige in Siam. But their enjoyment of it was rather short-lived.

Daily Manipulation: The King's Men

In 1634, Schouten gave Van Vliet, who was to take charge of the *comptoir* during his journey to Batavia, instructions. He inferred that the decline of the Company's status in Ayutthaya in the few years prior to his directorship was caused by the clumsy inexperience of the resident employees in the matters of 'court management'. In order to restore the old good reputation of the Dutch nation and the former trade privileges, he strongly recommended that his assistant should treat not only the King but also his officials discretely.⁴⁶ Although, ultimately the Dutch depended on the King's favour, it was indeed negotiating and arranging with his servants which consumed most of their time, eating it up even more than attending court events.

Being a foreign trade organization, the VOC had to deal regularly with the men of the *Phrakhlang* Ministry. These officials could obstruct the core business of the VOC—buying and selling goods, loading and dispatching Company ships from Ayutthaya, all of which required the court's permission—by delaying or even silencing Dutch requests. As we have seen, even in the ceremonial receptions of embassies in the presence of the King, the officials could manipulate the situation because the Dutch and other foreigners were disadvantaged by the linguistic barrier and the intricate protocol governing the event. The VOC and all other foreign merchants were especially dependent on the favour, schedule, and even fate of the *Phrakhlang* Minister; without his authorization, trade could not take place. As a custom, the outgoing *Oppehoofd* brought some gifts to the *Phrakhlang* and the King's favourites, when he introduced his successor.⁴⁷ In 1634, when the *Phrakhlang* was released from a short spell of imprisonment, the Company men went to congratulate him

with gifts, although Schouten admitted that they hated him bitterly.⁴⁸

On a daily basis, the Dutch came into contact, directly and indirectly, with many more officials outside the *Phrakhlang* Ministry for many other reasons besides trade. A few days after the execution of the officials who had failed in the 1634 expedition against Patani, Schouten and Van Vliet were invited to a celebration prepared by Okkhun Phiphat at a temple where they had the opportunity to meet other officials 'publicly' and discuss the unsuccessful campaign.⁴⁹ Such social events certainly served to facilitate the exchange of information and consequently were important to political and trade relations between the Thai and the Dutch. Importantly, the *khunnang* did not always limit their actions to the duty assigned to them. Schouten mentioned that the VOC exchanged silver into local money with such officials as the Justice Minister and the Governor of Nakhon Ratchasima.⁵⁰ In 1634, Dutch sailors quarrelled with some slaves of Okya Phitsanulok, which resulted in the death of one slave. Schouten reacted immediately by seeking to deal with the slave-owner personally in order to keep the matter from the King's knowledge. Although both parties had seemed to reach a compromise, the *Okya* still reported the case to the monarch. Fortunately for the Dutch, King Prasatthong valued his friendship with the Company more highly than Phitsanulok's loss. After providing the Siamese with some compensation, the Dutch were able to interrogate their own men and send them back to Batavia.⁵¹

The Dutch attitudes towards Siamese officials were overwhelmingly negative. To Van Vliet, the *khunnang* were 'avaricious' exploiters, like the King himself, 'very jealous of each other', 'political intriguers', and 'arrogant'.⁵² Their households mirror the situation at the court itself.

Yes, every one of them wants to be served, honoured, and feared as if he were a worldly god. They usually practice great authority over those who are in their houses and over their slaves. ... they do not allow themselves to be addressed otherwise than with bent body, folded hands, and with ceremonious praisings. ... In their houses and on the streets the mandarins are honoured like small kings among their subjects, but coming to court they are only slaves.⁵³

As far as the Dutch were concerned, the Siamese administration was moved or unmoved by the greed, lethargy, and abuse of power of its members. Schouten asked his colleagues to direct the Company's business with patience and be tolerant of the 'innate laziness' and 'unchanging custom' of the Siamese nation.⁵⁴ Van Vliet saw himself locked in a struggle against the 'unreliable course of the world and inconstancy', which he perceived to be the nature of the Siamese court.⁵⁵

When VOC Commissioner Antonij Caen came to Ayutthaya in 1632, the aim of his mission was to mediate in the Siamese-Patani conflict,

which was troubling the Company trade around the Sultanate, and purchase goods, especially rice. Although he was personally received by King Prasatthong, the conflict clearly was beyond the Company's powers of persuasion. In reflecting his bitter experience in negotiating on exporting goods with the Siamese bureaucracy, Caen's report of his frustrating encounter with the *Phrakhlang* is unexpectedly amusing. At the first and second meetings, the Minister sat behind and talked through a door which was ajar about 'two inches' only. At their third and last get-together, the Siamese opened his door wide enough to show his entire face and told Caen to come again and to remain longer to explore Siam. The Dutchman answered that he had seen more than enough and did not wish to come back; in response to that answer the *Phrakhlang* began to laugh.⁵⁶ The Commissioner also described the painful procedure of obtaining a licence to export goods. The licence should be issued by the *Phrakhlang* with King Prasatthong's permission (or in some cases, his brother's), then checked by Okya 'Rabbasit' (probably Ratchaprasit), and stamped by Okphra Chula, and finally brought to the Dutch by the *Syahbandar*. The harbour master suggested to Caen that should his people desire a speedier procedure, they should give the *Phrakhlang* more presents—a suggestion which the Dutchman resisted and suffered from for not following it. Caen expressed his despair:

They handle their affairs so cleverly that one can feel and grope how well they catch the ball and throw it back from one man's roof to the other. ... If we complain about it to the *Phrakhlang*, he will laugh at us and close his door. If we grumble about it to Okya Rabbasit, he will drive us off with a sigh (since he is a formal party, only). If we go to Okphra Chula, he will consider us crazy.⁵⁷

Despite the success of his 1633 embassy, De Roij did not fare much better than Caen when it came to negotiating with the *khunnang*. Every time he made an appearance at court, he had to pay fifteen guilders to the doormen and 'other beggars', whom he did not specify. He complained that these courtiers did not regard begging as shameful. In order to earn something extra, they repeatedly postponed issuing the export licence so that the Dutch had to come to court again and again.⁵⁸ Considering the system worked as a whole, the Siamese were 'efficient' in their own way.

The Dutch did have several friends at court. But an official who was considered too helpful to the Dutch could expose himself to the danger of court intrigue. In 1634, Okphra Ratchamontri, who was a competent interpreter and good friend of the Dutch, was imprisoned as a result of the accusation made by his rivals of being 'too devoted to the Dutch and neglecting the royal service'. The VOC tried to secure his release by petitioning to King Prasatthong, while his 'clever wife' sought help from one of the royal consorts. Despite such representation, the monarch remained

unconvinced. Schouten believed that the interpreter had fallen victim to the King's efforts to coerce the Company to help his expedition against Patani. Depriving the Dutch of their interpreter—who officially intermediated for them with the local bureaucracy—was one of the many ways the King showed his displeasure and put pressure on the VOC men in Ayutthaya. A few months later, the ailing Ratchamontri was released but prevented by the *Phrakhlang* and the influential Okya Chakri from showing his gratitude to the King. He was replaced by Okmun Songphanit ('Trongpanit' in Dutch reports). Whereas the former was fluent in Portuguese and Malay—the usual languages used between the Dutch and the Siamese court—and knowledgeable in dealing with the Dutch, his successor, who gained the position with Chakri's help, knew only the 'Moor' language.⁵⁹

It was logical that a close tie with the Dutch might engender not only suspicion but also jealousy. The positions of interpreter and harbour master to the Dutch must have been attractive to Siamese officials, because they could profit from the constant chance of gift-receiving (in kind and money). For example, the Dutch rewarded the said Ratchamontri for helping facilitate the reception and the departure of the Dutch embassy in 1633 with thirty reals-of-eight. Okphra Choduek, who issued the licences to allow VOC vessels to pass the tollhouse, received four to five catties (of Siamese money) a year from the Company. To keep their business flowing, the Dutch had to try to please many people from the King's current court favourites to the tollhouse keepers.⁶⁰

The Company men were actually aware that Siamese officials did not receive a regular income from the State—they made use of the land and manpower assigned by the King to earn a living—and that they also made a profit from foreign merchants.⁶¹ When the court asked whether the Dutch could transport some of its servants to some of the places with which they had contact, Van Vliet refused and explained that the Company did not want to bear the cost. The Dutch had to provide their workers with food and wages, whereas the Siamese King did not pay his 'slaves' anything for their labour. According to Van Vliet, that was a difference between the 'free' Dutchmen and the 'servile' Siamese.⁶²

During one of his bitter fights for the Company's interests, Van Vliet told the *Phrakhlang* that the Siamese regarded the VOC as a 'milk-rich cow', which gave them profit and hence deserved a better treatment. The Minister chose to privilege the Japanese and Chinese merchants who 'never came to him with empty hands', although they, as Van Vliet pointed out to him, were often absent from Siam for a long period, unlike the Dutch who remained in the kingdom permanently.⁶³ The Dutch were aware that this position was 'one of the most profitable offices in the whole kingdom'.⁶⁴ But they did not want to take into account that, to the

Phrakhlang, a long-term profit, as Van Vliet suggested, was understandably less appealing than an immediate benefit, especially when his term of office was anything but certain.

'Abuse of power' was another recurrent topic in Dutch observations of the Siamese officials. An incident in 1635 infuriated Schouten with the way the high officials in Ayutthaya mistreated the wife, and her female relatives, of the Dutch free burgher Jan van Meerwijk who had been engaged in a serious conflict with a prominent courtier. Schouten lamented that 'it is noticeable what kind of people have been elevated to the highest positions and honour here in this kingdom through the usurpation of the crown'. However, he also wrote that 'it is certain that once this depraved and shameful act is made known to His Majesty, he will not let them [the abusive officials] go unpunished'. Schouten was successful in making his plea for the release of this family to the King through the good offices of Okphra Chula.⁶⁵ Another case of the abuse of power by court officials which Schouten witnessed ended tragically. A 'prince' from Pahang who was exiled to Ayutthaya attempted to escape with his family, allegedly in order to save his wife from harassment by Okya Chakri. Both the family and its followers were hunted down by the *Okya* and other officials. The hunt ended in disaster for the fugitives: the prince, after having committed the 'honour killing' of his wife, was murdered. King Prasatthong even rewarded Chakri and the other members of the lynch party for this outcome.⁶⁶

The Dutch had good reason to avoid any direct confrontation with the King's men and did not always want to put their complaints before the King himself. Schouten described King Prasatthong as a strict ruler who punished so harshly that his actions often engendered hatred—though we can assume that it was well concealed. The Company men in Ayutthaya were afraid of the revenge which the relatives or the followers of those who were punished might take.⁶⁷

Despite his high rank, a man in the *Phrakhlang*'s position could be subject to humiliation at any time, as was often reported in the VOC sources. In early 1634, King Prasatthong sentenced the *Phrakhlang* to death for having had an innocent person, whose sister he tried to harass, killed during his governorship in Khorat. However, the King's favourite, Okya Chakri, successfully begged for his ally's life. Soon, the Minister was released but had to demonstrate his gratitude to the King before he could start working again.⁶⁸ In 1639, another *Phrakhlang* was punished in the most horrifying way for problems his slaves had created. The Dutch documented the horrors to which the grandee was subjected:

The King ordered to decapitate two of the *Phrakhlang*'s malicious slaves who fought against those of [Okya] Pichaisongkram. The *Phrakhlang* was locked on five positions of his body, and seated between the dead, one head was put

in front of him, the other tied to his neck, and his body was smeared with the blood of the executed.⁶⁹

Half a month later, the *Phrakhlang* was released from prison. However, his insignia (two gold betel boxes), his title, and office were not immediately restored to him. For some time, he was confined to his house and was not allowed to appear in any council.⁷⁰ In the absence of the incumbent *Phrakhlang*, business transactions stood still for a few days until the court had appointed another official to assume the necessary tasks. To the Dutch it seemed that King Prasatthong punished harshly but also forgave arbitrarily. This may have been part of his strategy of making the *khunnang* uncertain about their future—as long as they had not given up their hope of his amnesty, they might not react against him out of sheer desperation.

In their writings, Van Nijenrode, Schouten, and Van Vliet give the impression of the absolute power of the Siamese ruler over his servants. Only once did Van Vliet write: 'By dishonesty and avarice of the mandarins, his [the King's] mandates are seldom carried out or maintained.'⁷¹ In the Company reports based on day-to-day experiences, it is clear that, from these early days, the Dutch had not only learnt that the power relations at the Siamese court were characterized by the officials' dependence on the King's favour, but that the *khunnang* also consciously tried to manipulate their master. Van Vliet especially reflected on what the limitations of King Prasatthong's information were:

We agree with what the Siamese mandarins say, namely that their King has only ears and no eyes, that is to say that His Majesty always shuts himself up in the palace, [and] knows nothing other than what his mandarins bring to him.⁷²

Whether the Dutch liked it or not, they still found that the Siamese King was the last resort in their fight against his 'inefficient', 'avaricious', and 'abusive' officials. Consequently, they had to find ways to be heard and seen by the King. Schouten and Van Vliet's directorships were the time of trial and error as they were constantly inventing means to deal with the Siamese. First of all, Schouten emphasized that the VOC employees should take the title and rank conferred upon them by the court more seriously than as just a flattering compliment. Van Vliet praised his predecessor for having created a situation in which the Company men were officially allowed to appear in the gathering of the court officials, which was sometimes presided by the King. He believed that such opportunities would generate respect and even cause a *frisson* among the courtiers, who feared that the monarch might converse with the Dutch and learn from them of their 'deceitful and greedy conduct'.⁷³ Consequently, the Dutch operated a preventive strategy, as well. Shrewdly, they tried to make use of

the competition among the *khunnang*. For example, when Schouten was summoned to translate the Siamese letters to the Governor-General, he took this opportunity, in the absence of the unhelpful *Phrakhlang*, to make known the VOC's requests to the council of officials.⁷⁴ He obviously hoped to circumvent the manipulation of information by the *Phrakhlang* and to get a message through to the King via one or more of these officials, who might be working to the disadvantage of the Minister.

Van Vliet was extraordinarily bold in dealing with the *khunnang*. He once succeeded in forcing the *Phrakhlang* to agree to talk with him about the sappanwood delivery, by threatening to call the issue to King Prasatthong's attention by firing a musket in front of the palace.⁷⁵ On another occasion, royal officials asked the Dutch to show their customary homage to the King as he proceeded past their lodge along the river. Knowing that he could not completely refuse to comply with the officials' request, Van Vliet decided to use this chance to show his frustration about the lack of co-operation of the newly appointed *Phrakhlang*. He summoned his men, all 'badly dressed', to await the royal procession in an 'undecorated' barge moored at the river bank in front of the lodge. The VOC men remained there until the King passed by their settlement without any of them performing a gesture of reverence, and immediately retreated. The *Opperhoofd* believed that this action would surprise anyone who remembered how well the VOC usually co-operated with court protocol. Normally, the Company employees decorated their lodge with colourful bunting and flags and waited on the front quay even until the procession of the nobles which followed the King and his family had passed by.⁷⁶ Admittedly, this kind of unco-operative action flying in the face of protocol was exceptional, and in this case, though attracting Prasatthong's attention, it did not have the desired effect. Yet, it shows the differences between the position of the Dutch, at least in 1637, and that of the indigenous people (and some other foreigners). Normally, if the latter dared to rebel against the protocol, they would either be tortured or put to death.

The Dutch had another trick up their sleeve, the intermediaries. Local merchants, both indigenous and foreign, male and female, were important collaborators since they not only supplied the goods required by the VOC but also served as contact persons with the different levels of the court to which the Dutch had no access or to which their efforts to make contact with were hampered by social, cultural, and linguistic divides. When the Dutch wanted to know what kind of cloth they could sell in Siam, they obtained the samples via a Portuguese mestizo Alexander Pinheiro (Pinjeur in Dutch sources) who picked these up from the court.⁷⁷ Not only did Van Vliet obtain local commodities through his Mon concubine, Osoet Pegu, he also used her wide-ranging network to

gain access to the officials via their wives or to the female members of the court. For instance, Osoet contacted the wife of the mint master to facilitate money exchange for the Company.⁷⁸ In 1636, when the Dutch wanted to get rid of their *Syabbandar* Okluang Siyot, they recruited her assistance, too. While Van Vliet tried to approach the King's Chamberlain Okya Uthaitham, Osoet helped the Dutch to reach the royal consort (via that lady's female servant) whose brother was the incumbent *Phrakhlang*. Undoubtedly, gift-giving played an important part in this. The consort consequently sent one of her ladies-in-waiting to guide the Dutch to her brother. The Minister was surprised by his sister's involvement and by this move made by the Dutch and promised help. Despite these elaborate manoeuvres, none of these people managed to convince the King to replace Siyot with the official the Dutch had in mind.⁷⁹ Understandably, the King did not want the Dutch to have a collaborator whom they had chosen themselves. At least, the Dutch had made themselves heard.

Conclusion

The Dutch were fully aware of the centrality of the King in Siamese society, as everyone directed their attention to him. The politics of Siam absorbed them into its centripetal movement. At the same time, they were not blind to the fact that the King's power was contested and negotiated at every level—foreign relations, internal politics, and daily life.

Did the Dutch understand the necessity for King Prasatthong's brutal rule? It seems that they did. Not only did the Siamese State need a strong man to lead it, the ruler himself had to be strong to survive the many challenges addressed him. Neither law, the legitimacy of the royal blood, nor the sacredness of a monk's robe could safeguard the Siamese Kings and their heirs. In the end, a forceful will allied with control of force prevailed. The Dutch accounts tell us how vulnerable and sometimes defenceless the Kings of Ayutthaya were, in contrast to the pictures conjured up in the court ceremonial and protocol which focused on elevating the ruler above the rest.

In order to survive in this competitive environment, the Dutch believed they always had to be visible to the eyes of the King. The Siamese ruler was the ultimate ally in their fight against the inefficiency and corruption of the Siamese bureaucracy. However, this was not an easy goal either, especially when even such a powerful king as Prasatthong was said to have 'no eyes' to see what his *khunnang* were doing. Also, the world of the Siamese elite was founded on, to combine the words of Schouten and Van Vliet, the 'unchanging custom' of 'inconstancy'.

CHAPTER FIVE

OBSERVING KING NARAI'S WIDENING WORLD

Introduction

What made King Narai one of the most famous Asian rulers in and after his own time was his internationally oriented conduct. This monarch's avid interest in the outside world expressed itself in many forms of interaction: not only through the trinity of trade, war, and diplomacy, but also at the most personal level of consuming and acquiring foreign material culture and ideas. Characteristic of his reign was the dominant position of the King himself in politics and administration, attributable to his forceful personality, as well as the strong presence of foreign elements at court.

Having successfully disposed of his opponents in the conflicts of succession of 1656 and 1657, for much of his thirty-two-year reign, King Narai was occupied with attempts to maintain his hegemony over the vassal states and to expand his territories, in particular towards the north. Even during these hectic periods of war, the sources conjure up a picture of the vivid diplomatic life at his court, which reached its zenith in the 1680s, notably with the glorious exchange of embassies with France and Persia. At the same time, Narai kept a tight control on foreign trade which always remained a very important source of the wealth he needed to pursue his extravagant personal interests in reaching the wider world.

In comparison with various French accounts from the same period, such as those by De Chaumont, De Choisy, Tachard and La Loubère, the Dutch records about King Narai seem to be far less 'exciting', since they pay less attention to the 'details' of Siamese court life than they used to do during the previous reign. The relationship between the VOC and the Siamese court had reached the state of 'business as usual'. The Dutch were by now acquainted with the basic rules governing their relations with the Siamese. Newcomers in this cross-cultural context, such as the French, were still in the process of learning but failed to understand the essential rules, especially that of not mingling in the internal politics of Siam.

Although the French seemed to replace them as the Siamese King's most favoured nation, the Dutch found a new focus for their attention which arose from the fact that, to a greater extent than his predecessors, King Narai interacted energetically with the outside world by expanding his own to meet it. Admittedly, the active diplomacy and the craving for

foreign goods and the reception of foreign knowledge—for which Narai was known—were by no means new to the Kings of Ayutthaya. It was the degree of their use which was unprecedented and, in retrospect, was never to be repeated by any of his Ayutthayan successors. His interest in the world inspired his courtiers as well as the foreigners to compete for his favour through diplomatic exchanges, and by supplies of material culture, knowledge, and services.

The first part of the present chapter deals with the question of how the Dutch learnt to deal with the new reign, the ruler, and his servants and how they tackled the new elements at the court, namely the French and Phaulkon. The second part investigates Dutch understanding of the expanding 'worlds' of the King, in terms of a search for diplomatic glory, material and intellectual curiosities, and their own attempts to make use of that insight.

The VOC and the Conflicts of Succession of 1656

One important lesson which the Dutch traders had learned about Siam was that its political culture was prone to problematic bursts of succession strife and violent elimination of rivals. At the end of King Prasatthong's reign, the politics of Ayutthaya faced a situation in which the *chao* were strong and the *khunnang* were weak. Through keeping strict control by various strategies, Prasatthong had been successful in preventing his officials from becoming too powerful. Upon his death, submerged problems arose from the rivalries among the princes of the blood.

As Prasatthong's reign approached its third decade and the King had entered his fifties, the question of who would succeed the ageing ruler arose, at least in the form of rumours. The VOC men closely monitored the situation. In 1650, Commissioner Rijckloff van Goens reported a rumour that the King might abdicate in the throes of his grief at the death of a beloved queen and entrust the kingdom to his son (unspecified) before his own demise, to make sure that his brother the *Wangna* Prince would not become King as he was entitled to 'according to the Siamese law'. (Van Goens, too, was convinced of a brother's right to succeed to the throne of Siam.) According to his report and other circumstantial evidence—that, in the last phase of his rule, Prasatthong deliberately prepared his sons for government tasks—, it seemed that the King did not want his brother to succeed him. As a precaution, Van Goens advised the High Government to consider sending a letter and some gifts to the presumptive heir to the throne, 'the King's son' (probably the first-born, Chaofa Chai), in order to secure his favour for the future.¹

Since the succession troubles of 1656 have been well studied by

Dhiravat,² also on the basis of Dutch sources, only a short summary of the events is needed here. In August 1656, King Prasatthong died without appointing any clear heir. Consequently, the throne of Ayutthaya was claimed by three factions, led respectively by the *Wangna* Prince, by Chaofa Chai (who was born before his father's enthronement), and by Phra Narai (who was born of a queen who was a daughter of King Songtham). The Dutch seemed to be familiar with all three, since the VOC sometimes needed their assistance in obtaining Siamese goods.

The first to take control was Chaofa Chai who seized the royal palace—the symbolic centre of political power in Siam—immediately after his father's death and claimed the throne. However, the *Wangna* Prince and Narai combined forces against him and ended his reign on its very first day. Prasatthong's brother became King Sisuthammaracha but soon clashed with Phra Narai. On 27 October, Narai and his helpers were able to seize the royal palace and capture the new King. As did his one-day predecessor, Sisuthammaracha died a royal yet horrible death: he was beaten to death with a sandalwood club. Thereupon Narai assumed the throne at twenty-four or twenty-five years of age. In the following year and in 1670, he in his turn was to be challenged by two of his half-brothers (Phra Traiphuwanathityawong and another unnamed prince), whom he managed to eliminate without great difficulty.³

Whereas Schouten and Van Vliet composed their records of the succession disputes in 1629 without having witnessed the events, the report of 16 November 1656 by Volkerus Westerwolt (1650-1; 1652-6) has a contemporaneous quality and is indeed the only eyewitness account available for the succession conflicts. Unlike his two predecessors, Westerwolt did not bother with pondering the question of the rules of succession because the absence of rules, or rather of respect for rules, must have been obvious to him. He was more concerned with how to get the Company business done amidst the chaos.

The Dutch were affected by these internal struggles in three ways. First of all, there was an attempt on the Siamese side to involve the VOC—regarded as a military power in Ayutthaya—in the earliest stage of the conflicts. On 8 August, the Company interpreter came to the lodge to report the death of King Prasatthong and asked the Dutch on Phra Narai's behalf for some men and guns to fight his eldest brother. Biding his time, Westerwolt made an excuse for not coming to the young Prince's aid on the grounds that he had to prepare the few men he had at that time to defend the Dutch compound against robbers and thieves who might seize this opportunity to attack the lodge. Most importantly, the Governor-General had forbidden his men in Siam, on pain of death, to become involved in any internal troubles.⁴

Secondly, a rumour was spread intimating the possibility of a com-

bined attempt by the Dutch and the Japanese to replace King Sisuthammaracha with Phra Narai. Speculation was rife that the royal consorts were so afraid of an alleged attack on the royal palace by the Dutch that they were preparing to flee. The rumour was completely unfounded but it reflected the views of people in Ayutthaya on the strength of these two foreign communities. Though fearful for their lives, the Dutch could not help feeling proud that the Siamese were afraid of them more than of other nations.⁵

While this rumour of a possible threat from the VOC was spread, King Sisuthammaracha tried to win the loyalty of the Dutch. The first step was that the *Oppperhoofd* and his deputy were obliged to drink the water of allegiance to the King. The oath of allegiance was an obligation by which officials and court servants, apparently including some representatives of the foreign communities who were integrated into the Siamese court hierarchy, swore their loyalty to the monarch. This ceremony, which took place twice a year in March and October, had been mentioned by Jan Joosten de Ruij, Schouten, and Van Vliet, without any indication of their direct participation. At a certain point, the Dutch showed their adaptability to the local situation and embraced this tradition, though not without some reservations. In March 1644, Van Tzum was ordered to drink the water of allegiance to King Prasatthong. He first used the pretext of an illness to excuse himself from participating in the ceremony, which he deemed 'improper', presumably considering himself already a sworn servant of the Governor-General. However, King Prasatthong diplomatically compelled the Dutch to swear their loyalty to him, at least ceremonially, by offering the Dutch a special audience, in which the 'sick' *Oppperhoofd* did not have to crawl on the ground but was allowed to walk towards the King's throne. It was such a great honour that the Dutch dared no longer refuse.⁶ The situation in 1656 was different: Westerwolt and his successor, Jan van Rijck (1656-62), showed no hesitation about swearing the oath. To their amazement, apart from expressing his wish to continue a good relationship with the Governor-General and promising to re-confirm the Company's commercial privileges, King Sisuthammaracha rewarded each of them with a silver betel box. The Dutch perceived this gesture as a great honour, especially since they believed that the Siamese 'did not love to give'. Some Japanese traders even came to congratulate the Dutch in their lodge. Both men asked permission from Batavia to keep these gifts, as their predecessors had been allowed to keep the tokens given by King Prasatthong for their service or as compensation for the difficulties the Dutch had experienced at the Siamese court.

Lastly, the succession conflicts obstructed the Company business. As an example, the permission to export rice which the Dutch had obtained from King Prasatthong was now annulled. Westerwolt and his men had

to start anew applying for 1,000 *lasten* of rice from King Sisuthamaracha. Their hope of obtaining at least half of that amount was thwarted by the new Okya Chakri. The process suffered further interruptions because of the suspension of the *Phrakhlang* who was demoted because his brother had aligned himself with Chaofa Chai. When his replacement told the VOC that the King had granted 320 *lasten* of rice, Westerwolt was apparently satisfied. Then, another 'unexpected disaster' for Dutch business came on 26 and 27 October when Prince Narai launched his attack on the royal palace.

Westerwolt seems to have explained Narai's action in terms of self-defence. He reported that the friction between the Prince and the new King had been kindled by Okya Chakri. The *Oppelhoofd* remarked that this grandee was motivated by his own ambition to succeed Sisuthamaracha, who had no male heir, after other princes of the blood had been eliminated. Narai's men had been sent out of the capital, molested, and even killed for 'trivial reasons'. On 26 October, when the Prince did not appear at court, as he was expected to do, his uncle took this act—which Siamese court protocol regarded as rebellious—as the reason to try to get rid of him.⁷

The Dutch sources say that Phra Narai was then assisted by various groups. First of all, he was joined by his younger brothers. Then, the former *Phrakhlang*, now Okya Sukhothai, whose brother had been executed at the behest of King Sisuthamaracha, also defected to him. These and other helpers brought in their own men to buttress the Prince's forces. Lastly, Phra Narai managed to recruit assistance from foreign communities in Ayutthaya: the Japanese, the Ayutthaya Malays, and the Patani Malays. Other sources mention more foreign groups involved, including the Persians and the Portuguese.⁸ It was nothing new in Siamese politics to seek foreign help; previously, the Japanese force in Ayutthaya had helped Prasatthong to overcome his rivals in 1629. But the scale of the foreign help Narai was able to obtain showed that he had established an even vaster connection with various communities in Ayutthaya and gave a clearer indication of Ayutthaya as a cosmopolitan port city by 1650s.

Without meeting much resistance from his uncle's men, Narai's attack on the royal palace proved to be a lightning success. In his last words about Sisuthamaracha's short reign, the profit-oriented Westerwolt regretted having given Portuguese gold chains to him, who 'craved for gold': 'Had we known that his life would soon end, we would have postponed it [namely giving the gifts].'⁹

Westerwolt praised Phra Narai for his 'manly and audacious deed'. Nevertheless, he was amazed by the fact that the symbolic centre of power in Siam fell shamefully to attackers twice within only two and a half months, before remarking, characteristically: 'It can be well measured

what the Siamese would do when they are faced with courageous and experienced soldiers', the implication being a Dutch force. He went on to comment that the Siamese did not stand by each other and, in contrast to people in other countries, did not flock to defend their king in times of trouble. Westerwolt estimated that there must have been more than 200,000 able-bodied men within and around the capital, but only 10,000 men were involved in this fight, and that 'during the assault on the court, no one other than the Malays and the Japanese were armed with muskets'. He explained that Siamese men usually went to war armed only with a sword and a pike, or no weapons at all, and that no common man had a gun.¹⁰

Dutch neutrality during the turmoil of 1656, even their refusal to aid Phra Narai, did not jeopardize their position in the eyes of the new King. The familiarity of King Narai with the VOC can be traced back to, at least, as early as 1655, when he granted some timber to and ordered some goods from the Company. Although the Prince promised to pay for his orders, the Dutch were not sanguine that this would happen. Westerwolt had earlier described Prince 'Promnarit', as the Dutch called him, as someone who 'appears to be fairly avaricious' and 'seems to take after his father'.¹¹ The *Oppperhoofd* now told the High Government how to deal with this new monarch:

A young ruler will assume that the Honourable Company is afraid of his power, which he believes to have. Thus, in the first instance, not everything he desires should be given [to him] because, in this effeminate nation, if one shows no manly courage ..., one will not be respected by them.

Westerwolt also told his colleagues in Ayutthaya not to let themselves be intimidated by any threats, since 'it seems to be a local custom here to frighten someone with a death sentence'.¹²

Finally, after a long delay, in mid-November Westerwolt obtained permission to leave Siam with four Dutch ships. In the company of the Malays, the Japanese, and the Portuguese, the *Oppperhoofd* was summoned to the court, where he bade farewell to the new monarch. King Narai called the officials by their name to find out whether anyone was absent, which would be understood as a sign of repudiating his right to rule. Westerwolt remarked that the damage from the attack on the royal palace was barely visible: 'It seems that those who stormed the court tried to avoid damaging it'.¹³ The Dutch were glad to receive the news that, on 16 December 1656, King Narai had announced a pardon to the rest of minor malefactors. This was a signal that business could start again after having been blocked by the fighting and by the absence from daily work of the main trade officials. Within a few months, people returned to their normal life from hiding and again took up their crafts and trade. The VOC even managed to buy rice, though at a high price, despite a bad har-

vest season.¹⁴ These events reflect both the limited nature of this political conflict and the resilience of Ayutthaya in recovering from a political crisis within a short time.

At the beginning of King Narai's reign, the Dutch found themselves in a favourable position, as a major trade partner of the royal court. The King and the prominent officials were friendly to them. On 19 November 1656, the new *Oppehoofd*, Jan van Rijck, reported having drunk the water of allegiance with the *khunnang* in front of the King. King Narai's generosity towards the VOC can be deduced from the list of his inaugural presents to the Governor-General, which included, among other items, two elephants and two gold dishes on pedestals. Van Rijck gave reassurances that, although the latter were not really appreciated by the Dutch, such a gift expressed the King's truly beneficent inclination towards the Governor-General. He believed that these golden dishes were highly esteemed in Siam because they were used to serve betel to the King; it was a gift no Siamese King had ever before sent to any foreign potentate.¹⁵

The Dutch and King Narai's Officials

In general, King Narai was in a strong position in his relations with his officials. He overcame the challenges from his half-brothers and their followers as well as the uprising of the Makassarese in Ayutthaya in 1686, which also involved a faction at court.¹⁶ Apart from these, as Dhiravat observes, 'court conflicts and rivalries were between courtiers and did not involve the issue of the royal succession'.¹⁷

On the other side of this master-servant relationship, King Narai must have been served by many officials who shared his interests in commercial, military, and diplomatic expansion. For example, in January 1661, Van Rijck wrote that the ruler had been advised by the 'young rash lords' to go to war in the north, but another group, the 'elderly', was trying to talk him out of it. Considering that living conditions in the kingdom were desperate, the Dutch hoped that the young King would stop listening to the young officials and start ruling his realm peacefully instead of seeking glory by conquering other lands.¹⁸ Needless to say, these officials did not always serve their lord's purpose more than their own.

As various studies have shown, not only King Narai but also his *khunnang* involved themselves actively in trade. The VOC records repeatedly describe how difficult it was for the Company men to compete with local, or localized foreign, officials. *Oppehoofd* Nicolaas de Roij (1669-72) described his view of the nature of the behaviour of the *khunnang* as follows:

The noblemen, who are extremely self-seeking people, will never fail to swindle a part of the gain for themselves. It occurred so even when they knew that the King would punish them for it and arrest them as a result of it. [That is] because the Siamese have such a nature that, [even if] one has by now seen his predecessor beheaded today, one [still] would commit the same offence tomorrow, like we have seen enough in Siam at court—that is within the King's sight. And if they do so at court, one can easily assess what they are supposed to do in remote places.¹⁹

In short, for these *khunnang*, the chance of benefiting from trade, whether this would be the fruits of a direct participation or came with 'gift-giving' or 'bribery' by merchants, was irresistible, whatever the costs and the consequences. The *Phrakhlang* Kosa Lek was an excellent example of a Siamese official actively participating in trade, which made him a formidable rival of the VOC. He had a strong personal tie to King Narai because his mother had been the King's wet-nurse and he had been brought up as the King's foster brother.²⁰ He was undoubtedly a wealthy man, considering that, for example, every time the VOC requested rice for export, it gave him two catties of silver.²¹ Kosa Lek also served as a field general in the wars against Burma and Lansang during the 1660s and 1670s.²²

In 1670, Governor Balthazar Both of Malacca recommended the Ayutthaya office procure the *tra* for the export of Ligor tin directly from the Siamese King instead of from the *Phrakhlang*, because he believed that the licence issued by the Minister did not have the desired effect. De Roij had to explain to Batavia why it was not possible to comply with Governor Bort's recommendations, emphasizing that no one other than the *Phrakhlang* was entitled to issue the export licence, which in turn had to be approved by the King. In other words, the *tra* the Minister authorized was the King's permission. The King of Siam never granted anyone a *tra* personally. Nor did he write in person to any foreign rulers, except for the powerful ones like 'the great Mughal, the Emperor of China and the King of Golconda'. De Roij insisted that there was no more powerful letter of authorization than that issued by the Minister and no solution was available other than to bribe the local authorities and even the miners in Ligor in order to obtain tin. He added that, in response to his complaint, Kosa Lek insisted that he should not be blamed for the Company's failure to procure tin but that the Dutch themselves were at fault for failing to strike a better deal locally. The Siamese also refused to support the Dutch request for privileges to trade in Phuket and nearby Bangkhli (especially in tin), where the English had already obtained permission to build a factory.²³

The Dutch continued to believe that their difficulties in obtaining tin in Ligor during the late 1660s and early 1670s owed much to the *Phrakhlang* himself, who also had a share in the tin trade.²⁴ The problems

the Dutch experienced were not illustrative of the situation of the other foreign traders in Siam at that time. When Governor Bort in Malacca suggested that De Roij should intervene and try to exclude Asian and other European traders from Phuket and Bangkhli, the latter explained that it was the King's policy to attract as many foreign merchants to his kingdom as possible. The royal court, for example, had written off the debt of the English of 1,000 catties of Siamese money because King Narai hoped to have them trading in Siam. Meanwhile, the Malay, the Indian and other traders were also treated cordially, being accorded banquets and other favours. When they did not sell their goods, the court would even intervene by buying them and order more commodities from these merchants.²⁵ Without the support of the *Phrakhlang* to present their case to the King, the position of the Dutch was even more aggravated by this royal policy of open competition.

Although the *khunnang* benefited from King Narai's commercial expansion, their enthusiasm for it was not unbounded. Besides 'the *khunnang*'s inherent prejudice against active participation in trade', the Crown strategy of using the inheritance law (which made the King his servants' heir) and the confiscation of property as punishment made it difficult for officials to pass on their wealth to their next generation and prevented the formation of a 'commercial class' of officials or dynasties of rich trader-officials.²⁶ De Roij's interesting observation should also be added to the explanations for the seeming lack of initiative among Ayutthaya officials. When King Narai's ships returned from Bengal and Coromandel fully loaded with the much desired textiles in 1670, the *Opperhoofd* was obliged to assess the situation. Despite this successful shipment, the *Opperhoofd* still did not believe that the monarch was planning to become directly involved in the 'silk trade' with Bengal—an action which might deprive the VOC of its share in the textile trade between India and Siam as well as that with East Asia. He asserted that Narai was not accustomed to and hence not confident enough about sending a large capital sum overseas. He pointed out that the Siamese King preferred to trade in such produce from his own country which cost him little to procure as tin, areca, sappanwood, *namrak*, elephants and elephants' teeth, and iron. Nor would his officials dare to encourage him to invest abroad because: 'If the undertaking shall fail, it is a rule here that those who have recommended it must pay back, that is why they all keep quiet.'²⁷

Kosa Lek, once more, serves as a good example of how uncertain the life and career of an Ayutthayan courtier could be. Although he had a close personal relationship with King Narai and supplied many services, he did not escape the fate which *khunnang* often encountered. Despite having returned victorious from the northern campaign in May 1672, the

Phrakhlang apparently fell from King Narai's favour because, according to De Roij, the King questioned his loyalty—or to put another interpretation on it: he probably grew envious of the grandee's power. Whatever the true cause, the King's displeasure was made known when the returning army under the Minister's command entered the capital without any celebration. The keen eyes of the Company office in Ayutthaya were caught by these political developments, and it consequently advised that Batavia divide the usual presents for the *Phrakhlang* into two parts: one for the Minister and one for the King's favourite, the Persian Okphra Sinaowarat or Aqa Muhammad. The latter, who held the office of the head of the Persian community in Siam, was also actively engaged in trade.²⁸ The Dutch had been aware of the 'hidden hatred and jealousy'—suggesting a rather indirect confrontation—between the two grandees and carefully tried to balance their relationship with both men.²⁹ But it was only in 1683, four years after the death of his Persian rival in 1679, that the Dutch saw Kosa Lek's ultimate fall from grace. According to the only—French—source giving an explanation of his eclipse, King Narai punished the *Phrakhlang* for having taken a big bribe from some *phrai* who did not want to perform *corvée* building a European-style fortification.³⁰ The *Phrakhlang* died in July 1683, after having been severely flogged. The Dutch say that the King mourned the death of one of the kingdom's most competent ministers. His grief did not stop him seizing all the wealth Kosa Lek had accumulated during his career, and leaving his family with nothing.³¹ The fall of Kosa Lek appears very much a repeat of earlier stories of an official being too powerful, popular and/or wealthy to be trustworthy. Yet, King Narai did allow his courtiers more freedom to pursue their own interests than his father had done. That someone like Kosa Lek was able to hold his office for so long and to hoard such great wealth would have been impossible under King Prasatthong.

VOC policy towards Narai's officials was forged by the hard experience of its men-on-the-spot during the previous reign, especially with the former Okya Sombattiban under King Prasatthong. Between 1648 and 1653, the Dutch were to a large extent dependent on the patronage of this influential courtier. In his report of 1650, Van Goens recognized how important it was to secure the Okya's support but also envisaged the danger of relying on one official only, especially when he was 'old and has many enemies'. Therefore, he recommended his colleagues in Ayutthaya look for other allies at court as well.³² When Sombattiban as admiral of the Siamese fleet not only failed to conquer Songkhla in 1652, but also in his role as the King's negotiator could not muster naval assistance from the VOC for this expedition, he was disgraced. From that moment, the Okya turned his bitterness against the Dutch. When he was made the *Phrakhlang* in late 1654 or early 1655, he was in the position to make

their life difficult to the extent that they even believed that King Prasatthong had revoked the VOC export right in hides of 1647 because of Sombattiban's influence, compounded by the intrigues of some Chinese traders. They were saved from further bullying when he perished in the purge following the fall of Chaofa Chai, with whom he had taken sides. As Dhiravat points out, this was a particular case in which an official, who usually relied on the King's favour, was also dependent on a foreign power, in this case the VOC. The Dutch now resolved to avoid ever again being closely associated with a courtier of Okya Sombattiban's eminence.³³

Immediately after his enthronement, King Narai rewarded his ally, Okya Sukhothai, by appointing him Okya Chakri. This grandee was listed by Westerwolt as one whom the Dutch should handle with kid gloves. Nevertheless, having had to deal with Okya Sombattiban earlier, the *Opperhoofd* advised his successors not to foster a close relationship with the new *Chakri*. The Dutch had visited the late Sombattiban's residence in the evenings 'on a daily basis' in order to secure his favour and to learn the inside news from the Siamese court. (This shows that King Prasatthong also relaxed his control on his officials' movements in the later stages of his reign.) Such close contacts were no longer advisable because most of the court news no longer gave the Dutch any clear advantage and the visits only added to the Company's costs. Bitter experience had taught that courting Okya Sombattiban by no means guaranteed his support: their most powerful friend paradoxically had turned out to be their most dangerous foe. In the end, Westerwolt's prudence saved the Company from another wasted investment because, in December 1660, Okya Chakri fell from royal favour as a result of the machinations of King Narai's Queen and half-sister who blamed the *Okya* for the death of her brothers in earlier court conflicts.³⁴

Westerwolt not only recommended a policy change, he also sought to preserve existing useful tools. First and foremost, he thought that the Dutch should still try to maintain the alternative way to gain access to the Siamese court which Schouten had been able to obtain: participating in official gatherings, which was less individual and more structural. To make use of the right to attend the daily court gatherings, Westerwolt recommended that the assistants Hugo Culemburgh and Enoch Poolvoet who, but especially the former, had mastered the Thai language and were knowledgeable about court affairs, should be present in order to follow such resolutions taken by the court as might affect VOC interests. From such a distance it is difficult to ascertain from the sources available to what extent and for how long the Dutch made use of their right to attend the official gatherings of *khunnang*. Westerwolt's second recommendation was to continue the practice of gift-giving, but suggesting it be set up

more systematically. The *Phrakhlang* should be given considerable gifts twice a year without the VOC requesting anything in return. In Westervolt's experience, when the Dutch made a request, they had to give and keep giving until the Minister was satisfied and decided to grant their wish. But in following the course he suggested, he hoped to secure the *Phrakhlang*'s favour in advance.³⁵ This did not effectuate the desired effect, since the Dutch kept complaining that they had to give presents to the 'greedy' *Phrakhlang*.

The employment of foreign experts in the Siamese bureaucracy had long been a part of the system. However, what was innovative in King Narai's politics was the employment of foreigners in administrative positions to counterbalance the power of indigenous administrative officials. The advantage to the King was that these foreign administrator officials had no control of (indigenous) manpower and were therefore unlikely to pose a large-scale threat.³⁶ The strong presence and increasing influence of foreign officials in Narai's administration could not have escaped the Dutch, especially since they were suffering from the abuse of power by these foreign courtiers more than ever. The most notable case was the threat to the VOC employees made by the Persian official Abdu'r-Razzaq and his Chinese accomplices, which partly contributed to the crisis in Dutch-Siamese relations in 1662-3. In the later stages of Narai's reign, a courtier of Greek origin, Constantine Phaulkon (1647/8-88), became the most trusted official of the King and the most powerful person in the kingdom. He recruited many more foreigners, especially the Europeans, into royal service.³⁷ His rise to prominence and close connection with the French had far-reaching effects on the commercial and political life of Siam.

Novelties at Court: The French and Constantine Phaulkon

Two remarkable developments took place in the second half of King Narai's reign: the onset of the French involvement in Siam in the 1660s and the emergence of Narai's new favourite, Constantine Phaulkon, in the 1680s. Although the results of these developments were felt in the personal life of the King, their coincidence undoubtedly affected the politics of the realm, as well.

The French involvement in Siam, which ended in a highly dramatic manner with the eviction of their troops and the persecution of the French subjects in the kingdom during the political turmoil of 1688, actually began with a chance encounter, the rather accidental arrival of French priests of the *Société des Missions Étrangères* in April 1662.³⁸ After the Apostolic Vicar Bishop Pierre Lambert de la Motte and his com-

panions had been prevented from reaching their destination by a combination of storms at sea and reports of the persecution of Christians in Cochin China and Tonkin, they decided to call at Ayutthaya. The French quickly became aware of the potential of this port-polity to become a base for their missionary work in South-East Asia, impressed in particular by its central location between the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea, and the religious tolerance of the local inhabitants and the Government. In 1665, King Narai responded positively to the *Missions Étrangères* by permitting its members to proselytize freely in the kingdom, except in the palace. In return, Lambert volunteered to set up a school to teach European sciences. In the following year, the King granted the French a piece of land and construction materials to build their church. The site developed into a complex including a two-storey seminary, a presbytery and school, a residence for missionaries in transit, a cemetery, and a hospital.

In Siam, the *Missions Étrangères* decided on the strategy (used by the Jesuits) of evangelizing the local elite in the belief that the ordinary people would follow; that is to say, they hoped to convert King Narai to Roman Catholicism. Lambert failed completely to see that the Siamese King identified with Buddhism on cultural and constitutional grounds as closely as the French Crown did with Roman Catholicism. From a misunderstanding born of their own religious conviction and fond hopes, the French priests also mistook Narai's openness to foreign culture as a sign of spiritual longing. This misperception was responsible for the subsequent French political and military policies towards Siam. To achieve the said strategy, it was essential for the French priests to create a 'political and social standing' which would allow them access to the monarch. Despite their misconception of the King's attitude towards Christianity, the priests were realistic enough to know what captured Narai's interest: trade, royal opulence (which included diplomacy with great foreign rulers), and science. This was by no means innovative; the Portuguese and the Dutch had created their own standing in Siam by offering commercial and diplomatic contacts, as well as military and navigational technology. The *Missions Étrangères* recruited help from the newly established French East India Company and Louis XIV of France. In capturing the interest of the French Company, the priests tried to build up a convincing picture of Siam's wealth and strategic location as a commercial centre in the well-connected trading network of East Asia, more specifically of its access to China and Japan—the markets still closed to the French. To both Louis XIV and King Narai, they emphasized the idea of the royal responsibility to defend the faith, partly to ensure the obedience of the population to the Crown.³⁹ The members of the *Missions Étrangères* not only offered themselves as intermediaries between the French East India

Company, the French Crown, and the Siamese court but also between King Narai and the material and spiritual world of Europe.

With the appearance of this new actor, the rivalries among the Europeans at the Siamese court once more became perceptible. The ecclesiastical status of the *Missions Étrangères* did not change the fact that its members were very much serving the political cause of the French King and the CIO, which was a Government enterprise. In 1674 and 1675, the Dutch reported that the French priests, notably the visiting Bishop François Pallu, were using their access to King Narai to undermine the positions of other Europeans in the King's eyes. Not only did they request, with the papal sanction, that all local Portuguese clerics should fall under the jurisdiction of the French Bishop in Siam, they also tried to discredit the Dutch by informing the monarch of the progress which France had made during the Dutch War (1672-8), in which France and England fought against the Dutch United Provinces and its allies. According to the VOC report, the French statement that the Dutch had lost their country was countered by Narai's question as to how the Dutch could maintain their previous condition, if they no longer had a country. Non-plussed the French could not answer this and told him that they had been informed of this by another priest in Surat. The Siamese court was, it seems, rather circumspect in accepting foreign news. As we have seen, King Ekathotsarot even sent an embassy to Holland to test the Portuguese allegations about the 'country-less' Dutch and to evaluate the potential of the Dutch as his new ally.

The Dutch were certainly not inexperienced in this kind of battle; during the first three decades of the seventeenth century, they had fought the Portuguese, who had levelled all sorts of accusations at them, such as being 'buccaneers without a country of their own'.⁴⁰ One way to counter-act European rivals was to make their own (version of the) news public. In 1656, the VOC had obtained royal permission to hold a celebration to mark its conquest of Colombo. It was reportedly witnessed by all communities in Ayutthaya and was believed to have had the effect of discrediting the Portuguese in Siam.⁴¹ In October 1674, the Dutch in Ayutthaya, by permission and with the sanction of King Narai, publicly celebrated the 'glorious news' from their home country and expected that the French priests at court would not be pleased. This probably concerned the signing of the Treaty of Westminster on 19 February of that year which ended the Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-4), which was part of the Dutch War. Kosa Lek, who otherwise was not very helpful, now made a contribution of gunpowder, with which the Dutch could fire salutes from their cannon.⁴²

As if one rival nation were not enough, the Dutch in Siam faced another opponent—one man, yet even more powerful than any national fac-

tion. Judging from how fast he made his career at the Ayutthayan court, Constantine Phaulkon from Cephalonia undoubtedly possessed the quality most required of him, to help King Narai reach the outside world. Intensely ambitious, he strove for more than the role to which he was initially assigned. Much has been written about this Greek adventurer during and after his own time, and yet his true personality remains obscured by the contrasting stories surrounding his life.⁴³

Phaulkon probably arrived in Ayutthaya in 1678 serving as an interpreter to Richard Burnaby of the EIC. English Roman Catholic sources indicate that, a year later, Burnaby presented his Greek subordinate to the *Phrakhlang* Kosa Lek to help facilitate the trade between his Company and the Crown, by installing his own intermediary at court.⁴⁴ Dutch sources give only little of Phaulkon's background. They mentioned him for the first time bargaining for textiles in Ligor in 1679. In 1685, *Opperhoofd* Johannes Keijts (1685-8) told a different story: only after his English patron had left Ayutthaya did Phaulkon decide to learn the Siamese court language and was therefore able to put himself in the service of Kosa Lek. Yet, the rest of his report agrees with the general knowledge that the Greek soon became a favourite of King Narai, who was impressed by his keen intellect, and his real chance came after the death of the disgraced *Phrakhlang*.⁴⁵

Various sources suggest that Phaulkon impressed the Siamese court with his ability to manage its 'foreign affairs'. He was able to reduce the transportation cost of the Siamese embassy to Persia in 1681-2 to half its initial price. He also dealt ably with the payment of English debts to the court, and acted as a translator during the second interview between Bishop Pallu and King Narai in 1682.⁴⁶ In 1683, the monarch offered him the chance to replace Kosa Lek in the office of *Phrakhlang*. The wily Greek declined and instead accepted to act as an advisor to the Malay Okya Wang who assumed the position. In this way, he hoped to avoid attracting the envy and resentment of the other officials and from a practical point of view was in a position to run the *khlang* (royal treasury) which controlled the buying and selling of commodities for the Crown.⁴⁷

Unquestionably, on a day-to-day basis the Dutch felt some of the advantages that Phaulkon brought into the Siamese administration because of his ability to facilitate between different systems. His initial role as interpreter eventually made a difference at the Siamese court, even for the Dutch. In early 1682, *Opperhoofd* Faa asked Batavia to attach a translation of its future letters to the Ayutthayan court in Portuguese or English, besides the Malay version, because Phaulkon who had mastered both languages could help the *Phrakhlang* understand the content better than the Malay interpreters did.⁴⁸ The Dutch were also alerted to his rising importance when, in that year, they asked him which presents King

Narai preferred. Incontrovertibly, the Greek helped facilitate one of the most stressful tasks for the Company men: the settlement of the King's debts. It was a constant problem, the more so because each official involved kept his own account, and to compare all of them only complicated the matter. Phaulkon had made the suggestion that the account of the King's debts be kept only with his European bookkeeper or hired scribe, an arrangement which Faa admitted was effective.⁴⁹

Real problems arose later, when the man who was the intermediary between the powers became a man of power himself. The VOC men who had no close tie with Phaulkon considered his rising influence a hindrance rather than an opportunity. Jur van Goor points out the similarities between the difficult situations of the Dutch in the early 1660s with Abdu'r-Razzaq and in the mid-1680s with Constantine Phaulkon. In both cases, the Dutch had no direct access to King Narai and had no means to try to negotiate their position.⁵⁰ Phaulkon's strong grip on the administration of trade and monopolistic handling guaranteed friction with the Dutch as well as with other trading communities in Siam, including his former employer, the EIC, which failed to make the most of this connection. According to the Dutch, while quarrelling with the English Company, Phaulkon still felt comfortable and powerful enough in his newly acquired position to send some gifts via his 'friends' to King Charles II of England in 1684.⁵¹ It was a different story for the Englishmen in royal service at Mergui who were exploiting their freedom of action and Phaulkon's backing by preying on cargo ships in the Bay of Bengal. Their activities inevitably led Siam to a clash with the EIC.⁵²

Phaulkon had qualities which are reminiscent of Narai's former favourite, Okya Sinaowarat. *The Ship of Sulaiman*, the account of Siam written by Muhammad Rabi Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim who was a member of the Persian embassy to Ayutthaya in 1685, mentions that this Persian grandee had enjoyed the King's favour not just because he had 'much knowledge of the real workings of politics and governing', but also because he was 'well-versed in matters pertaining to kingly magnificence and the regulations of food and drink in formal gatherings'.⁵³ These were the qualities which proved highly satisfactory to King Narai who used ceremonial to promote his glory in the eyes of foreigners.

In 1685, Phaulkon notified the VOC that, from then on, King Narai should be addressed in the letters from Batavia by the title of 'Emperor' and as 'His Imperial Majesty' (as 'keizer' and 'zijn keizerlijk majesteit'). Keijts believed that this change was fabricated by the Greek himself, and that the ruler was either not aware of the difference between the new and the old titles, or not even informed of the change. The *Opperhoofd* pointed out the fact that the Siamese King was called by his subjects nothing other than 'Propouto Tjoekka' (Phraphuttha Chaokha), which meant the

'highest lord'. His insight was, however, not appreciated by the High Government which preferred instead to present this change to the Gentlemen Seventeen as Narai's arrogance.⁵⁴ Whether King Narai understood it or not, Phaulkon was trying to enhance his master's glory in the way the Europeans would understand.

The Dutch *Opperhoofd* reported that he had attended two banquets given by Phaulkon in the King's name for all prominent Europeans at his residence in Lopburi. The first banquet was a vehicle for the glorification of King Pedro II (r. 1683-1706) of Portugal, and the second to honour the coronation of the English King James II (r. 1685-8).⁵⁵ At one of these banquets, Keijts encountered five French Jesuits and a military commander, the Chevalier De Forbin,⁵⁶ whom he called the regular guests of the Greek grandee. The alliance between Phaulkon, the French, and Roman Catholicism had started in 1682, when, in order to marry Maria Guyomar de Pinha, a Roman Catholic of Japanese and Portuguese extraction, the Greek official formally embraced her faith.⁵⁷ The French engaged him as part of their strategy to gain access to King Narai. The Dutchman described the event:

There [at the banquet], all was princely served in silver service. The table was served by French and some Siamese, and incessantly provided from the palace with a variety of food. We toasted various times, among other things, the already departed and still to depart friends of His Majesty. We did not talk about anything other than the war affairs and especially how vigorously His Majesty of France (whose portrait was displayed in the front hall) besieged the city of Luxembourg [in 1684] and conquered it'.⁵⁸

Again, this European gathering sponsored by the Siamese court was not an unprecedented scene. Promoting the 'harmony' among Europeans, however ephemeral, had been part of the European diplomacy of Siam, along with balancing them off against each other.

Unconventionally for the Kings of Ayutthaya, from the beginning of the 1670s, King Narai preferred to spend long periods outside the capital at his palace in Lopburi, which became the place where people did business with the court. While staying there, King Narai relaxed his routine a little. In 1676, the Dutch were invited there to meet the King personally for half an hour.⁵⁹ However, they also complained that, in Lopburi, the King was blinded from everything.⁶⁰ In the 1680s, it was impossible to do business at court without the involvement of Phaulkon and the French. Keijts was irritated that the French priests and De Forbin kept Phaulkon busy and away from other business (especially concerning the Dutch), for example, with a fortification project. He also remarked that the French Jesuits would 'shamelessly' join any meeting. For instance, they attended a meeting between him and Phaulkon which did not concern them at all.⁶¹ What the Dutch did not know was that there was also a complaint

current among the French that the Greek prevented them from gaining direct access to King Narai.⁶²

Despite the changes which resulted from the presence of the French and Phaulkon, the Dutch, experienced and resourceful in dealing with the reality of the Siamese court, did not easily give up their position and their share in the Siam trade. They sought for accommodation rather than direct confrontation, especially when it came to dealing with the powerful Greek courtier. Phaulkon was apparently well aware of how to make use of his position in relation to the Dutch when he simply asked them why he, despite the assistance he gave the Company, was in Batavia's bad books. Implicitly, he was saying that, if the Dutch wanted to prove that his suspicion was not true, the High Government should present him with some precious rarities as a token of its cordiality.⁶³ Keijts actually nurtured no hope of an improved relationship between the Dutch and the Greek 'because of his character and his conversion to Roman Catholicism'. Nevertheless, both parties tried to keep up appearances. The Ayutthaya *comptoir* not only gave wine and other European provisions to Phaulkon as gifts, it also hosted a feast for him, his family, and his Portuguese father confessor and secretary Frei Pedro, with other prominent Europeans in Ayutthaya, as best as its limited capacity allowed. On that occasion, Phaulkon generously rewarded the entertainers and servants with no less than 900 guilders.⁶⁴ In November 1685, the Greek arranged for Keijts to meet King Narai personally in Lopburi. The scene was impressive: King Narai made his appearance from the inner court on an elephant, standing only three or four steps away from the Dutchman, who was sitting on his heels. He communicated with Keijts via Phaulkon and bestowed a Siamese lower-body garment on him. After the King had withdrawn, Phaulkon and De Forbin came to congratulate the Dutchman on the royal gift. Despite the grudges against Phaulkon's trade policy, the experienced *Opperhoofd*, who had been playing along with the whole protocol, expressed his gratitude to the Greek whom he had since recently begun to address as 'Your Excellency', for arranging this audience. Considering that many French officers were not ready to accept Phaulkon's high position at court and accord him the concomitant honours, Keijts's behaviour was highly diplomatic.⁶⁵

With the second embassy under the leadership of Simon de la Loubère in 1687, France sent along 600 French soldiers under the pretext of giving Siam protection (for instance from the Dutch). Phaulkon was probably seeking to solve his problem of possessing no (indigenous) manpower by recruiting the French soldiers, but this number was a few times more than he had requested. The French actually meant to intimidate King Narai into allowing them to garrison the most important ports of Siam, Bangkok and Mergui.⁶⁶ The presence of the French troops caused increas-

ing friction between the French and the population, indigenous and foreign, in and around the capital city. Undoubtedly, the Siamese officials were deeply disturbed by the prospect of foreign troops in charge of the defence of the kingdom. The Dutch reported that many of these soldiers had been left there with nothing and had to beg or steal to survive. Keijts remarked, 'the impudent wantonness of the French is unbearable even for this simple national character [the Siamese]'. Local women were 'publicly caught, abused, and raped on the street' by these soldiers. Consequently, the land and water gates, which usually remained open, were closed and guarded. The VOC handed in a written protest and then presented an oral petition during an audience at court after Keijts and his assistant, Jan Wagensvelt, returning from the warehouse Amsterdam to the capital, had been 'illegally' searched—a breach of their immunity—in public by fully armed French soldiers. On that occasion their protest counted 'no more than those of the Siamese women'. Later, a ship of the CIO was similarly inspected, but the Dutch believed that this was staged to cover the French mishandling of the Dutch. The French then sent the French Governor of Phitsanulok, René Charbonneur (formerly Governor of Phuket), to ask for a reconciliation with the *Opperhoofd*. The French Company men even came to visit the Dutch lodge. Keijts believed that they might have felt compelled to seek reconciliation because King Narai was very angry about what their troops had done.⁶⁷ Likewise, the heads of the Portuguese garrison in Ayutthaya could not get along with the French commanders to whom they had to submit. Serious frictions led to the King's decision that the French commander, De Forbin, and his Portuguese counterpart, Ferdanabo, were to be banished from his service. The Dutch said that De Forbin was 'expelled' from the country, but the Frenchman wrote in his memoir that, being tired of the destitution of life in Siam and 'the malice of the minister [Phaulkon]', he had asked to be released from King Narai's service and for permission to return to France.⁶⁸ Ferdanabo was sent to Phitsanulok. A series of exemplary punishments was performed on minor officers on both sides. They included the chopping-off of hands (which were then hung around their necks), noses, and ears, or the branding of cheeks.⁶⁹

King Narai's Diplomacy

For the VOC employees in King Narai's Siam, diplomatic exchange and participation in court ceremony had ceased to be the 'decisive' indications for Dutch status in the eye of the Siamese court. Nor did these occasions any longer serve as the most important means to access the King of Siam. The Dutch even discarded Phaulkon's suggestion that an embassy sent by

the Prince of Orange would be appreciated by King Narai. The Company reports of this reign do not contain 'detailed' descriptions of receptions of any other embassy either; Siamese diplomatic protocol had become less enchanting to the Dutch. Despite the dimming of its magic, diplomacy remained one of the most important clues the Dutch had by which to understand the situation in Siam, for the lively diplomatic activities not only exposed King Narai's personal ambitions, they revealed the coinciding commercial and political dynamics of Asia. After all, diplomacy maintained its traditional function as a solution to the recurring conflicts between the Dutch and the Siamese. As in the 1660s and 1680s, Dutch and Siamese envoys travelled between Ayutthaya and Batavia to seek reconciliation.⁷⁰

The exchanges of letters and gifts between the VOC and the Siamese court continued on a regular basis. Whereas the contents of the letters from the Governor-General to the King were mostly restrained by formality, the gifts in exchange often generated small but recurrent disagreements, which wasted the time and energy of both sides. In 1665, when the court refused to accept Batavia's gifts, Enoch Poolvoet (1662-3; 1664-8) ascribed this diplomatic failure to the fact that the 'greedy' King Narai valued the Dutch presents 'too lowly'. He recommended that in future Batavia send the following as gifts: gold chains and diamond rings of considerable value, Indian textiles, sandalwood, Persian rose-water, and some spices.⁷¹ In 1670, the Ayutthaya office asked the High Government to stop sending small amounts of spices as gifts to the court, but to send either a large amount or none at all. By then, the Company clearly no longer considered the King of Siam one of its most important diplomatic partners, but its employees in Ayutthaya still had to worry about their prestige at court, because the letters and gifts from the Governor-General were presented to the King (or more likely, via the *Phrakhlang*) in the presence of 'other foreigners'.⁷² In 1672, the VOC even negotiated about the nature of the return gifts from the Siamese court. When King Narai generously wanted to give elephants, Batavia asked instead for tin or elephants' teeth because, as it claimed, its Siam-bound vessel was a warship and could not transport the animals, and presumably because the latter two products were more saleable.⁷³

King Narai continued the tradition of sending tributary missions to China which was now under Qing rule: in 1659, 1663 (twice), 1664, and 1665.⁷⁴ Dutch archival documents record that, in 1674, the Siamese court received a missive from the Chinese Emperor and an imperial seal in gold, stating that the officials in Canton were no longer allowed to open and translate the letters from the Siamese court to Peking.⁷⁵ In 1662, King Narai's warm welcome of the envoys of Zheng Chenggong, who had taken Formosa from the VOC, really disturbed the Dutch. The Dutch

perceived the King's cordial welcome of their fierce enemy's envoys to be an insult, if not an outright breach in Dutch-Siamese relations. They must have also been afraid that the bond between Ayutthaya and Formosa would strengthen Siamese competition in the East Asia trade. The Dutch remarked that the King was motivated to weave this diplomatic tie with the Chinese warlord because his treasury was empty, drained by his military campaigns in the north.⁷⁶

The VOC paid special attention to Siam's relations with the polities in and around the Malay Peninsula, which the Company considered its sphere of interest and influence, in order to be well aware of or predict the situation in the region. In 1661, the King's envoys returned from Aceh with complaints about how badly they had been treated by the court there. The Dutch, who would have little to gain from any direct trade co-operation between the polities in this region, deemed that the attempt by Ayutthaya to cultivate a good relationship with Aceh had reached a deadlock.⁷⁷

The alternations between war and tributary mission remained the main feature of the unstable relations between Ayutthaya and its vassals—relations, in which the Dutch also played an important role. In July 1662, two ambassadors from Kedah arrived in the Siamese capital with letters and gifts including the *bunga mas dan perak*. They used this opportunity to make a complaint in the presence of King Narai that the Dutch in Malacca had blockaded their river—an experience which Ayutthaya was soon to face—and consequently ruined their trade to the extent that, as they put it, the local people almost went naked because of the lack of cloth as the siege had scared the Indian merchants away. On this issue, King Narai displayed no intention of solving his vassal's problem and to put himself at odds with the Dutch.

In 1676, the eldest son of the late 'King' of Songkhla arrived in Ayutthaya with the purpose of asking King Narai's endorsement of his succession claim, over which he and his brothers were disputing. The King was very pleased with his request, crowned him with the title of 'Oja Sasultan', and showered him many presents. At his request, the Dutch went to greet the heir of Songkhla with proper gifts. He in his turn promised that from now on all the tin from Songkhla would be sent to the Company residents in Ligor. The Dutch hoped that, since Songkhla and Pattani had re-submitted themselves, the situation would now be favourable to their tin trade in the south. Obviously, foreigners also used the Ayutthaya court as a place to promote their own cause.

King Narai's fame went as far afield as West Borneo. The Dutch record that in 1662 an envoy from Sukadana came to present King Narai and the *Phrakhlang* with gold-engraved letters and gifts, including some rough diamonds, for which this polity was reputed. Having shrugged off the

lordship of Mataram, the ruler of Sukadana was now seeking protection from Siam. In order to prove his sincerity, he sent his son-in-law to be held hostage at the Ayutthayan court.⁷⁸ Sukadana was typically a less powerful state which fluctuated between independence and vassalage to different more powerful rulers in South-East Asia. Yet, in this case, the question as to who was the suzerain of whom drove even landed powers situated so far from each other as Ayutthaya on the Mainland and Mataram in Java into a virtual conflict of interest.

In the 1680s, the relationship between the Siamese court and the VOC went through another rough patch, partly as a result of the disputes over the 'vassals'. In 1681, Ayutthaya accepted from Jambi, one of its traditional vassals on Sumatra, the tributary gifts which included a large quantity of pepper. A year later, King Narai's envoys to Jambi came back with, again, pepper as 'return gift' from the Sultan. The VOC protested and informed the Siamese court that Jambi had already submitted to the Sultan of Mataram, and, more importantly, had given the exclusive rights to the pepper trade to the Company. Exacerbating the situation, the Dutch announced their intention to conquer Siak in Sumatra, which was also considered a vassal of Siam. Any actual confrontation between Ayutthaya and the VOC was avoided, after the ruler of Jambi had preyed on Siamese ships, thereby breaching his relationship with King Narai. But Batavia's threat to attack Siak still provoked Phaulkon to fire a warning shot over Dutch bows.⁷⁹ As the tension was rising, the matter was even more complicated by a rumour 'spread by the French' that the VOC was hatching a plot against Siam. The monarch decided to send an embassy to Batavia in 1686 to seek clarification on the state of the Siamese-Dutch relationship. His ambassador, Okluang Chula, was well received in Batavia and returned convinced that the rumour was completely ungrounded. Consequently King Narai rewarded both Chula and *Oppelhoofd* Keijts for their contributions to the successful crisis management.⁸⁰

In the 1680s, the Dutch saw King Narai's diplomacy put on another level. The relative stability of the later years of the previous decade had allowed the King to indulge his personal fascination with the wider world even more intensively. The 1680s were marked with the sending and/or receiving of embassies to and from new destinations, especially Portugal, Persia, and France. It is not within the scope of this work to study these embassies in detail; most of these have been studied elsewhere as well as the available sources allow.⁸¹ Here I want to emphasize some relevant aspects of these visits and the Dutch reactions to them.

In 1684, King Narai sent an embassy to Portugal via Goa, but it turned out to be an abortive one as it suffered a shipwreck off Agulhas Point in April 1686. The survivors of this unfortunate voyage were taken care of by the Dutch settlement at the Cape of Good Hope and brought back to

Siam via Batavia by the VOC ships the following year. An incomplete piece of a rough French translation of the instructions given to the Siamese ambassador to Portugal survives from this embassy. This document, found in the archive of the *Missions Étrangères* in Paris, shows how the envoys were prepared to answer anticipated questions concerning Siam by the Portuguese court, such as information about its territory and connections with its neighbouring polities, the commodities available, its contacts with foreign merchants, and its military capacity. Some of the proposed answers were vague and aimed more at impressing the Portuguese. But they also reflected how the Siamese thought of themselves or wanted to be represented. Michael Smithies and Dhiravat comment that the very fact that the French missionaries were able to lay their hands on this document, and find the time to translate it in part, indicates that 'their spy service was excellent'.⁸² Nevertheless, the VOC *Oppehoofd* mentioned that he had seen these instructions as well.⁸³ Indeed, if we look at Dutch experiences at the Siamese court, such as what happened during the visit of the Portuguese embassy in 1639, we must assume that an excellent spy service was not a French prerogative. A secret at the Ayutthayan court seemed to be the hardest thing to keep.

Despite the wane of Portuguese influence, the VOC factory kept a close watch on their affairs in Siam. In May 1685, a letter to Batavia reported the solemn reception in Lopburi of the Portuguese embassy sent by the Viceroy of Goa at the behest of the King of Portugal. The ambassador's entourage was welcomed and accompanied by an elephant parade, and by the Moors and other soldiers. Keijts noted that by Phaulkon's arrangement, the Portuguese were allowed to enter the court in stockings and shoes and to sit on chairs and wear hats. Actually, as we shall see in the following paragraph, the French had introduced European diplomatic etiquette to Narai's court at an earlier stage. The dialogue between the ambassador and King Narai was supervised by the Greek grandee himself, while this process would usually have required a *Phrakhlang* Minister and an interpreter. The aims of the mission were threefold. First, the Portuguese requested the right to trade freely in Siamese goods, except for those subject to royal monopolies. Secondly, Goa asked that the Portuguese and those under the command of the Captain-Major in Ayutthaya could be prosecuted by him (as the head of the community) and not by the Siamese judicial authority; this amounted to a request for extraterritorial rights. Lastly, the Portuguese required the right to control the affairs of the Portuguese Christians in Ayutthaya—meaning that there should be no subjection of Portuguese clergy in Siam to the French Bishop.

King Narai was reportedly pleased with the presents, consisting of mirrors, European textiles, silver plate, gold, diamond and ruby rings, and sil-

verware, which were valued at 5,000 *rijksdaalders* according to Dutch calculations. Besides these, the Ambassador personally presented the King with two peacocks and a curiosity described as a 'life-size statue of a female made of metal-mesh that, by concealed wheels, could move, and thus proudly showed its jewels as well as making a bow'. The Dutch also mentioned that the French Bishop Louis Laneau, 'who constantly kept his eye on everything at the court', rushed in to see the King after he had heard of the Portuguese request regarding the authority of the church. He claimed that the credentials of the Portuguese Ambassador were not valid and that the latter had deceived the King. Nevertheless, King Narai disregarded these accusations.⁸⁴ Ultimately, the French had nothing to fear because only the first of the three Portuguese requests—the right to trade freely in Siam—was actually granted. Still, King Narai richly rewarded the Portuguese with reciprocal gifts consisting of, among other items, lower-body garments with gold buttons, a gold kris, a gold cup with cover and plate.

All this was fairly trivial, in comparison with the 'real sensations' of Narai's diplomacy, namely his successful diplomatic exchange with Shah Sulaiman and Louis XIV. King Narai was the first to initiate the exchange of embassies with Safavid Persia; it is highly likely the idea was promoted by the Persian faction at court. He sent envoys to Isfahan in 1669, 1681-2, and 1684. Before the exchange of embassies between Siam and France came to fruition in the 1680s, King Narai had long before expressed his wish to send envoys to Louis XIV and Pope Clement IX, after he had received letters and gifts from both rulers in 1673, handed to him by the agents of the *Missions Étrangères* led by Pallu. Both formally thanked King Narai for providing protection to the French priests and urged him to preserve the freedom with which he permitted them to carry on their work; neither of them invited the King to convert. On this occasion, Bishop Pallu asked to be treated as a quasi-ambassador and to present the letters in a public audience.⁸⁵ The actual reception took place only six months later after long disputes over protocol between the French priests and the Siamese courtiers. King Narai eventually allowed the priests to appear before him as they had demanded, sitting on a richly embroidered carpet, wearing their shoes, and behaving in the European manner.⁸⁶ It took several years before the Siamese court and the French priests managed to dispatch the first embassy to France. Unfortunately this mission of 1680 suffered a shipwreck. The following embassies of 1684 and 1686 reached Europe and returned to Ayutthaya with the French embassies.

The year 1685 saw Narai's initiatives bear fruit when embassies from the French King and the Persian ruler arrived in his kingdom for the first time. Both embassies were celebrated in the accounts written by those who took part in them, such as Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim, the

Chevalier De Chaumont and the Abbé De Choisy. A few similarities between the two missions should be mentioned here, for they also point to their differences from the Dutch behaviour and attitudes towards Siam. On the one hand, the French and the Persians arrived assuming that the political and cultural superiority of their rulers and faiths 'would influence' the Thai. Consequently, they challenged Thai protocol and religion. They hoped to persuade King Narai to convert to Christianity and Islam, respectively. On the other hand, their accounts show that they tended to believe to 'have influenced' King Narai's life-style and thoughts.

Both the French and Persian envoys were certainly received with great magnificence, as their presence was essential to court propaganda. Yet, their claims to have been accorded great honour never before given to any other nations must be regarded with caution. The Dutch, and I suspect some other nations, had claimed the same before. After all, this kind of statement seems almost a recurring pattern of writing an embassy account. The French believed that so much honour was given to them because

[King Narai] was well aware how much the king of France, both through his power and his personal merit, ranked above other kings, and he did not think it possible to give too many marks of distinction to his Ambassador. ... it is said that some among them [the officials] were muttering and causing difficulties about receiving the Ambassador, alleging that such things had never been done for the ambassadors of the Emperor of China nor for those of the Great Mogul and the King of Persia.⁸⁷

Similarly, Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim understood the meaning of the Persian embassy to be to grace the King of Siam with the mercy of the Shah, as well as to enlighten the Siamese 'infidels'. Hence, a comparable view to that of the French can be found in *The Ship of Sulaiman*: 'Good rulers, therefore, take a further step on the path toward world harmony. With ambassadors and delegations as their key, they unlock the doors of world-wide friendship. Such was the intent of the Siamese king.' The author further presents King Narai as being

overawed seeing that our king [the Shah] ... had risen into the Heavens of eternal sovereignty ... Thereupon, the Siamese monarch hastened to open the accounts of friendship and affection, 'May Allah bless him and guide him into the fold of Islam'. ... The letter of favour from our own king ... indeed is from the mighty hand of Sulaiman and comes in the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate, it is a bright token of kindness.

Having described the Thai way of showing respect to their idols and King, Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim commented: 'Now these infidels were genuinely happy at heart for at last they were worshipping before the true word [Sulaiman's letter] and not before their vain idols.'⁸⁸

These French and Persian writers believed or wanted to make their readers at home believe that their nation alone was able to impose its own protocol on that of the Siamese. Before the audience of welcome, the French Ambassadors summoned the Siamese officials to instruct them in Thai court protocol. De Chaumont found it unacceptable and insisted to Phaulkon on the French practice being observed. The self-perception of the French envoys was made clear here by De Choisy: 'If they [the Siamese] are inflexible, and protest that the English and the Dutch have never made any difficulty about this, we shall tell them that there is a world of difference between a captain of the king's warship and all those merchants who run about the Indies.'⁸⁹ This is reminiscent of the attitude of the Portuguese Ambassador in 1639. The Persians, too, insisted on behaving in their own way during the audience with King Narai. To cut a long story short, both the French and Persian Ambassadors were allowed to deliver the letters from Louis XIV and Shah Sulaiman to King Narai themselves and to pay homage according to their own custom.⁹⁰ (In view of the Dutch experience, according to Siamese custom, which considered the letter containing the words of the foreign ruler more important than the ambassador, the letter would have been collected by the court and translated in a ceremony involving both sides prior to the audience with the King.) These concessions plus the receptions of the State letters from France and the Vatican in 1673 and the Portuguese embassy in 1685 are clear indications of Narai's 'diplomatic tolerance'. Yet, it can be said that these modifications in protocol, partly encouraged by the French priests and Phaulkon, did not occur without causing the King's hesitation and arousing irritation among his courtiers.⁹¹

Despite his many other flaws, judging by their norms, the French diplomats still viewed King Narai as a 'good' King, very much because he was interested in the God of the Christians, open to the world, that is Europe, and, of course, friendly to the French. De Chaumont described Narai in the following way:

His inclinations are royal, he is courageous, a great politician, governing alone, magnificent, liberal, a lover of arts, in a word, a prince, who (by the strength of his genius) has freed himself from diverse customs which he found in his kingdom, borrowing of foreign countries, and especially of Europe whatsoever he thought might most contribute to the honour and happiness of his reign.⁹²

Furthermore, De Chaumont believed that the French priests had altered Narai's idea of kingship. While traditionally the Siamese Kings were not wont to appear in public, King Narai became affable and more accessible to strangers because the French priests had taught him about the power and manner of the French Government and encouraged him to follow the custom of European kings.⁹³

Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim went even beyond that. Portraying Narai as an 'extreme iranophile',⁹⁴ the Persian writer emphasized throughout his account the significance of the Persian community in Siam and Persian influence on the ruler in many aspects. King Narai was reportedly brought up with Persian food, wore Persian clothes, employed Persian guards, and sanctioned the public mourning ceremony of the Shi'ites in Ayutthaya. The late Okphra Sinaowarat or Aqa Muhammad had reportedly instructed the ruler about 'all the foreign men of importance in the world', and 'refinement of character, management of the household and governing cities'. The author also claimed that the Persians had brought the King to the throne; which is not substantiated by Dutch sources.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, by the time of his arrival, the Persian community in Ayutthaya had lost its influence on and favour with King Narai. Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim blamed this on both the misconduct of some Persians and the 'sly, ill-begotten Frank minister', Phaulkon—the Persians' worst enemy and the best friend of the French. He also accused the Greek of weakening Narai's character and causing him to stray from the straight and narrow path of practising justice.⁹⁶

Clearly, both the French and the Persian embassies of 1685 failed to achieve their aims, open and alleged respectively, to convert King Narai to their religion. Not only did they mistake his openness to and curiosity about the outside world for spiritual longing, but they also misinterpreted the 'non-statutory aspects'⁹⁷ of the reception, namely compromises in the Siamese diplomatic protocol for the French and Persian ones which King Narai permitted, as him being in awe of their rulers. The Dutch would have understood better that these were the signs of the King's favour. But then again, their mindset was different from that of the French and the Persians. After all, Republican Dutch Company servants were not much interested in propagating the fame of their prince and their religion.

If we take into consideration the other sources—admitting that they are not always non-partisan—to help interpret the effects of the Persian embassy on King Narai, we also get quite a different picture from that presented in *The Ship of Sulaiman*, which glorifies the success of the mission. The French in Ayutthaya heard that King Narai had been angered by the behaviour of the Persians from the early days just after their arrival in Tenasserim.⁹⁸ Considering that Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim repeatedly expressed his contempt for Siamese customs and manners, the King may well have been irritated with the non-compliant attitudes of the Persians towards local protocol and situations. In the aftermath of the grand reception as described in *The Ship of Sulaiman*, the VOC men in Siam reported having paid a visit to the 'melancholic suite' of the Persian embassy in Lopburi. It was in the interests of the Dutch to treat these envoys well,

since Persia was an important trading partner of the Company. The Persian Ambassador, Ibrahim Beg, complained that no one in Siam other than the Dutch had honoured his presence. The *Oppehoofd* gave the Persians the required pass for their return journey, as well as less valuable items, such as preserved nutmeg, six birds of paradise, and as much cloves and mace as the Dutch had in stock. His generosity extended only so far and he gave all kinds of excuses for not lending money to this financially troubled embassy, which seems to have failed to obtain any help from King Narai.⁹⁹

Was King Narai deceived by all the boasting about the greatness of Louis XIV which the French priests and diplomats were feeding him? According to Keijts, a French diplomat presented King Narai with a life-size portrait of the French King and said: 'Your Majesty, here is presented to you the most prominent prince ruling over the whole Christian world.' Much to the satisfaction of the Dutchman, King Narai sarcastically replied: 'Mister Ambassador, you forget God in Heaven.'¹⁰⁰ The sense of cultural and political superiority displayed by the French and Persian envoys was encountered with pragmatism by the Siamese King, who profited from the 'ceremonial meaning of these visits'.¹⁰¹ By conceding some changes in the diplomatic protocol, Narai allowed these embassies to be successful and achieved his goal not only to enhance his prestige among his own people but also to have his name perpetuated in the histories of France and Persia.

Keijts was admittedly impressed by the processions which escorted the French ambassadors to court, although he did not bother documenting them in detail. What interested him, and his superiors in Batavia, more was the 'business' side of the embassies. The Dutch were determined to inquire into the purpose of the mission, and the kind and value of the gifts to King Narai.

The Dutch were aware that the French embassy of 1685 had two purposes: to convert King Narai to Roman Catholicism and to negotiate a commercial treaty with Siam. They had direct access to information about the French presents because two of their men, Daniel Brochebourde and the German pyrotechnist Hans Jürgen Mets, were on loan to the court and commissioned by the King to help assess the value of the said presents. These included, among other items, tapestries of different sizes, guns, mirrors, hanging clocks, an octagonal sundial, and a portrait of Louis XIV. The VOC men thought that the French priests managed to have an excessive value put on these presents. They tried to protest about it, presumably not only because they believed that the high estimates did injustice to King Narai, but also because the 'overpricing' of the French gifts was unfair to themselves, who constantly complained that the court set too scant a value on their presents. Under the circumstances, their

protest was not heard; the Siamese were determined to have this French embassy succeed.¹⁰²

The reception of the second French embassy in 1687, led by La Loubère, was briefly commented on by Keijts as 'less grand' than the previous one. Still, his short report on this embassy gives a rather vivid picture of how the Dutch tried to wheedle information about the French (which was not necessarily correct), and of who their informants were. Keijts witnessed the ever closer union between the French and Phaulkon when La Loubère presented the Greek grandee with the star of the Order of St Michel in the name of the King of France. Revealing his merchant's nature, Keijts was more interested in estimating the price of the star, rather than seeing it as a mark of royal favour and prestige. Here again, the Dutch disputed the French estimate of the star at 20,000 *rijksdaalders*; they bluntly valued it at less than 1,000. Phaulkon's Portuguese secretary told the Dutch that the French and the Siamese had to re-negotiate the contents of the treaty after De Chaumont had failed to convince Louis XIV of the results of his mission. The Portuguese Ambassador sent by the Cambodian court, who had been held in Ayutthaya against his will, informed the Dutch that the French were allowed to establish a lodge, some reported a fortress, in Phuket and even said that a Portuguese interpreter had seen the model for it.¹⁰³

King Narai's diplomatic expansion was so salient that the VOC men in Siam felt obliged to find an explanation for it. Therefore, at the end of 1685, Keijts reported on the different views he had gathered from Europeans living in Siam—at least his informants were mostly Europeans—and added his own opinion. Some people surmised that King Narai, with his treasury filled and realizing that he was growing old without an able heir, wanted to leave a glorious name to posterity. Another view was that the King, having grown tired of the Dutch, was trying to attach himself to other European rulers so that he could depend on their help, or protection, should there be a rupture in relations with Batavia. In employing so many Europeans and rewarding them handsomely, the King hoped to enjoy an appeasement with all fellow-princes and foreigners so as to free Siam from the threat of war with other nations. According to other informants, the King was deceived into this by the cunning French Bishop Laneau, who was rumoured to have delivered to the King a forged letter from the Pope and another from Louis XIV (probably this referred to when he and Pallu delivered the letters in 1673). This had resulted in King Narai's decision to send an embassy to France. Keijts said that he could not verify whether the two letters were indeed forged or genuine. But the fact that the letters had not been accompanied by any gifts made them suspicious. Lastly, it was suggested that all this diplomatic activity was serving the 'ambitious plan' of

Phaulkon, who knew how to influence the King, to rule Siam. The French priests and Phaulkon were exploiting King Narai's craving for international fame.

Keijts did not believe that the rulers of France, Portugal, and Persia would assist Siam against the VOC. It was also unlikely that King Narai would put himself under Louis XIV's 'protection' because he would not wish to forfeit the traditional suzerainty of the Chinese Emperor, nor would it accord with his concept of glory. Furthermore, the *Opperhoofd* believed that the King would not achieve anything significant by employing the '100-110 European scoundrels and vagabonds who had run away from their masters'. The Dutchman did not consider the ambition ascribed to Phaulkon at all plausible, because King Narai still had 'a brother' who was presumed to succeed him. Keijts himself tended to believe that the King was motivated by his pride prompted by the 'flatteries' at court.¹⁰⁴ This comment, though not pleasant, should not be dismissed. It suggests two main conditions: King Narai was longing for international fame and people around him were ready to promote it.

The Material World of King Narai

An interest in the materiality of power was a significant characteristic not only for the ruler of a South-East Asian port-polity, as the King of Ayutthaya, but a common trend in any royal court where 'power' needed to be propped up by 'pomp'. In daily life, King Narai surrounded himself with imported objects which served to distinguish him from the rest of society. Whereas the French actively introduced European material culture and ideas to the King, the Dutch played a more passive role as suppliers of foreign goods in compliance with the court's orders. Yet, in this capacity, they were no less important in their contribution to the expansion of his material world.

The King's lists of imported foreign items show valuable, exotic as well as intellectual objects. The VOC men had been prepared to adapt quickly to the exigent new reign. While still a prince, Narai had ordered items of various sorts from the Company: valuable objects such as red coral, amber, different sorts of textiles, gold buttons, diamond rings, a gold sword, and coloured enamelled knick-knacks, and also products of Western technology such as a compass, a spyglass, an hourglass, and Dutch paper.¹⁰⁵ His interest also extended to exotic creatures. For example, in 1680, the Dutch supplied him with live birds, which, though 'trifles', pleased him very much. The court also demanded walnut and clove trees which were to be planted in the grounds of the King's new

palace at Lopburi.¹⁰⁶ Even Dutch delicacies, such as cheese, ham, smoked meat, dried herring, wine, and vinegar, were part of the royal orders.¹⁰⁷

Certainly, the court was also supplied with rarities via other foreign agencies and by its own servants who were sent overseas to procure these objects. The VOC factory, however, had a special position because the King often sent for objects and skills which were to be obtained in Batavia, such as enamelling a sword scabbard, repairing a clock, and making body armour (after his own models). The Dutch paid special attention when the order concerned the objects required for the King's personal use. Hats with a high crown were expressly requested from Batavia by the *Opperhoofd* because the King liked to wear this kind of hat on hunting trips. Likewise, a spyglass 'in gold' was repeatedly requested by the Ayutthaya office because it was intended for the King's own use. The court also asked for eye-glasses specified for people of 'forty to fifty and sixty years old', presumably for the King's inner circle or even himself since he was in his early forties by that time.¹⁰⁸

In 1685, Faa expressly instructed his successor, Keijts, to preserve the King's favour by means of giving 'rare trifles'.¹⁰⁹ But surely even before that, the VOC in Ayutthaya had long adopted the 'politics of rarities' as part of its policy. As early as 1677, *Opperhoofd* Dirk de Jongh (1676-7) had learnt of the fascination of Narai and his court with glassware; consequently, he recommended the Company supply the King with this, instead of the gold chains which were valuable but apparently too plain.¹¹⁰ Even earlier in 1657, King Narai had ordered more than four hundred glass mirrors for his new palace from the Dutch.¹¹¹ He also used other imported glassware and marble sculptures to decorate the 'pagodas'.¹¹² Of course, not every wish could be fulfilled. In 1687, Keijts had to explain to the Siamese court why the Dutch could not supply glass furniture according to the Siamese models supplied. He tried to make the Siamese understand how European society functioned: 'Each country had its own secret techniques, for which one could give no precise reasons. For example, as the *Phrakhlang* knew, people in a certain place in Italy could produce good and big mirrors and other artistic glassware.'¹¹³ That was to say that making glassware was beyond Dutch expertise, which was not true but rather an excuse.

Towards the end of his reign, the tastes of King Narai developed more fancifully, and specifically, than ever. Besides the glass furniture mentioned, he ordered a stone threshold and fountain bowl from Coromandel, Italian paving stones, paper books and clocks from Holland, and two ostriches from the Cape of Good Hope from the VOC. Keijts complained to the Governor-General that the enthusiasm for curiosities of the Siamese was so overwhelming that they wanted to have 'everything' the Dutch had in their possession in their lodge. The Ayutthaya office even-

tually asked Batavia to send 'rare little things' like some marine plants which were easy to procure.¹¹⁴

Equally importantly, the VOC was also the most significant supplier of craftsmen—some skilled, some useless—to the Siamese court. These VOC craftsmen had a myriad of different experiences in Siam. A hatter was sent back to Batavia because there was no wool for him to work with. A pyrotechnist was borrowed by the King's army to supervise the preparation of ammunition. The carpenter who did not receive a salary from the Company but directly from the court was often kept waiting desperately for his payment. The same happened to the glass-blower Nathaniel Castelaar, who had first impressively demonstrated his art in front of many courtiers at Phaulkon's house in Lopburi (where he was lodged as well), but later behaved badly in protest because he, too, did not receive any money from the court.¹¹⁵ A Dutch constable was used as a 'pilot' on a royal junk to Bengal. The court sent a stonemason back to Batavia. He was trained in stone carving, whereas the Siamese needed a person skilled for quarrying stone from the mountains.¹¹⁶ The surgeon Daniel Brochebourde fared best among these borrowed specialists, as he became a trusted courtier of King Narai. Phaulkon had actually also borrowed another VOC surgeon for royal service, but this Willem Gerritsz was sent back because he was indiscreet in his speech.¹¹⁷ The list of the imported skilled persons described here mirrors the lack of specialists or the need for different techniques in these fields in Siam.

There are plenty of clues but it is difficult to determine how well Western knowledge was transmitted to Siam. The agencies for such knowledge dissemination, such as the VOC, did not really intend to propagate Western achievement to any greater extent than it was needed to win the King's favour. When King Narai asked for an 'able' gun caster and an experienced gunner from Batavia, the Company men in Siam deliberately advised the Governor-General to send someone with at least 'some skill' in shooting.¹¹⁸ Understandably, the Dutch were not keen on sharing their military secrets with the Siamese.

Traditionally, the court of Ayutthaya had only two alleys open for processing foreign knowledge: information gathering by its men travelling abroad, and the employment of foreign experts. Exceptional attempts were made by King Narai to learn from the outside world by sending his own men to be trained overseas. According to the Dutch, the Ambassador to Batavia in 1686, Okphra Chula, came back to report to the King on the 'well-ordered houses and the variety of craftsmanship' of that exemplary colonial city. As a result of that report, the Siamese court decided to send twelve young Siamese men to Batavia to 'study abroad': four of them to learn brick-laying, four to learn to be carpenters, and the other four to become smiths. The Ayutthaya *comptoir* recommended the High Govern-

ment acquiesce in this favour so that in future it would have an excuse no longer to send Dutch craftsmen to Siam.¹¹⁹ Later in early 1688, King Narai sent five young sons of officials to study at the Collège Louis-le-Grand in France to learn the culture of that country.¹²⁰

Regarding the supply of luxury and exotic items which their Company often presented as 'gifts', the Dutch were torn between two choices, winning the King's favour for their business and the fear of incurring expenses, not to mention losses. The Dutch did not necessarily blame the loss suffered on the gifts given to the King on his 'avarice'. They were well-acquainted with the inequities of the court pricing system, which usually estimated the price of their gifts more cheaply than their original cost.¹²¹ Even possessed of this knowledge, the Dutch also knew that should they fail to satisfy the King's requirements, their competitors would be willing to step into the breach. For instance, after the Dutch had repeatedly made excuses for not being able to provide an engineer, the Siamese court finally dropped its request because the French King sent two experts.¹²² Phaulkon himself by no means failed to recognize the importance of the 'politics of rarities' at King Narai's court and was quick to adopt it as one of his own manoeuvres. The VOC men in Ayutthaya reported that the Greek minister sent royal factors to England aboard an English ship to acquire some rarities for the King.¹²³ Apparently, Phaulkon could use his English and French connections and thereby avoid being completely dependent on the VOC for the supply of valued foreign goods.

The presence of Phaulkon as well as the French at court contributed a great deal to widening the scope of the King's interest in Europe. The French brought with them European material culture, not only in small items but also in seemingly big concepts. In early 1687, the Dutch reported that King Narai had been focusing on the building of fortresses on each side of Bangkok. Keijts thought that the reasons which seemed to motivate the King to build these fortresses were 'frivolous' rather than well grounded, because he considered it impossible that anyone would come to attack Ayutthaya through such a shallow, swiftly flowing river (presumably he was thinking of large-size, sea-going European ships). He guessed that 'it was rather a pompous idea of some Europeans who made a profit out of this plan under the pretext of its significance'.¹²⁴ But Keijts overlooked the fact that these fortresses were meant to display King Narai's grandeur.

King Narai's Intellectual World

King Narai and his people were living in a period in which their world was made larger by the growing international trade of Ayutthaya, by its

widening access to foreign technology, such as Western navigational and military knowledge, and, to a degree, by a growing interest about others. Besides his ability to afford anything thanks to his exalted position, the King himself was 'curious to the highest degree', as described by La Loubère.¹²⁵ He was a ruler who respected scholarship, always keeping his teacher and court astrologer Phra Horathibodi by his side, even during an interview with the French diplomats.¹²⁶

Admittedly, such information on his intellectual interests was not reflected in contemporary Dutch documents. This lack may be explained by the primarily commercial mindset of the Dutch observers and their limited personal relations with the monarch, in comparison to the French, who had the priests and Phaulkon as their major informants. The VOC had little to offer for the comfort of his soul, as this was not the purpose of its existence, or for his curiosity about the new sciences, except perhaps in some technology. But that does not mean that they were not well aware of the reactions of his direct environment to his foibles.

King Narai did not enjoy a reputation as a pious ruler, though he certainly could not ignore the conventional role of Siamese kingship as the patron of Buddhism. He did not use it as the guiding policy of his reign in the way that his father, who notably built the magnificent Wat Chai Watthanaram outside Ayutthaya proper, had done and his immediate successor, Phetracha, would do. Narai did have temples built and renovated but was not known for erecting any major religious edifice as a monument to his rule. He was keen on building European-style fortresses, for the enhancement of his temporal glory. The Dutch reported in 1676 that the King 'lost much of his credit' in the eyes of the Buddhist clergy when he suspended royal participation in the annual ceremony of the Speeding of the Outflow (of which the purpose, as the Dutch understood correctly, was to release the flood water which might jeopardize the rice crop). Towards the end of his reign, when he spent most of the year in Lopburi, the King also reduced his public appearances, most of which involved visits to and merit-making at temples in Ayutthaya.¹²⁷

Narai's seeming interest in foreign religions, Christianity and Islam as indicated in the French accounts and *The Ship of Sulaiman*, may have been part of his strategy to attract foreign contacts and assistance. Previously, during the succession conflicts in 1656, the Malay community in Ayutthaya supported him, partly because they believed that the young Prince would eventually convert to Islam.¹²⁸ Although a few Frenchmen had begun to doubt whether King Narai had a real interest in converting to Christianity at all, the key figures among them, especially Father Guy Tachard, still nurtured hope. In 1685, the Dutch reported that the King sent a 'crucifix of fine massive gold, of about one forearm high standing on a silver base' to a Jesuit priest in Peking, Father

Fernandez who found much favour with the Chinese Emperor, to be placed in the church there. This act had pleased the Roman Catholic clergy in Ayutthaya so much they were convinced that Narai would adopt their faith. The VOC men believed otherwise because they trusted a report from their informant at court, Brochebourde. The surgeon, who frequently held talks with King Narai himself, told the Company that the King was 'poking fun at all the priests'.¹²⁹ The King sent such a precious gift to a favourite of the Chinese Emperor as part of his attempt to promote a good relationship with China. After all, De Choisy made an interesting remark:

Oh my God, how he made me feel sorry, this poor King, when I saw him with this pomp, passing in front of 200,000 people at the river's edge, who, with their hands joined and their faces bowed to the earth, gave him divine honours! How could a poor man accustomed to such adoration not conceive of himself as being above humanity? And how difficult it will be to persuade him to submit to all the humiliations of the Christian religion!¹³⁰

Probably contrary to his own intention, De Choisy's remark suggests that the Christian concept, according to these Western observers, would not serve the purpose of Ayutthaya kingship. Yet, Narai's curiosity to learn about Christianity as a part of foreign, European culture may have been genuine enough. The Dutch also mentioned that the French priests were busy translating the Bible for the King but, understandably, they were more concerned about the fact that the Roman Catholic clergy tried to impress Narai with the alleged success of France in the war against the Dutch Republic.¹³¹ After all, the King received the news from the outside world attentively, and his knowledge about the European states and politics in particular impressed even La Loubère.¹³²

King Narai's other intellectual interests included astrology. It was important to the life and ritual of the court and the commoners in Siam. Every ceremonial and civil function had to begin with predictions to assess the most auspicious moment as determined by the astrologers: the casting of calendars, the founding of cities, coronations, funerals, the launching of military expeditions, and suchlike. The role of astrology in Ayutthayan society was obvious and even documented in Dutch sources. As early as the 1620s, the Company records report that King Songtham stopped his plan to go to war (against Cambodia) after a comet, generally considered a bad omen, had appeared. It is interesting to compare the way the Dutch and the Thai interpreted the appearance of a comet in 1680. In a matter-of-fact manner, *Opperhoofd* Faa described the 'behaviour' of this celestial object: 'A star with a tail [appeared] first obscurely in the Southeast, stretching the tail upwards, by which [it was] recognized. [It] was seen around four o'clock in the morning. Afterwards ..., according to the report of the Dutch constable, [it was] at the bright midday,

close to the sun, and to be seen more clearly than before.’ At the same time, the court astrologers interpreted the comet as a negative sign and prayed for a good outcome.¹³³ Evidently, whereas the Dutch understood this phenomenon from an astronomical viewpoint, the Siamese thought in astrological terms, considering its effect on human life. Nevertheless, I should emphasize that the Dutch observers in the 1620s and 1680s did not ridicule the Siamese responses to celestial phenomena; they simply reported these as matters of fact.

Under King Narai, astrology found a new use in the creation of a new style of writing Thai history. From the fifteenth century up to then, *tamnan* (legend) was the dominant form of history writing. It blends the travels of Buddha through time and across continents with local events without placing them in a chronological framework. In 1681, at King Narai’s behest, Phra Horathibodi, now composed a history which presented events using the lunar calendar to provide ‘precise temporal context’. The result was the *Luang Prasoet Chronicle*, the first of the *phongsawadan* (dynastic history) genre, which relates the history of Ayutthaya from 1324 to 1605, in which humans (the Kings) stand central, instead of Buddha. Ian Hodges suggests that the creation of this chronicle was inspired by Narai’s strong interest in astrology and astronomy, and, indirectly, European scientific advances.¹³⁴

As was his father, King Narai was concerned with the question of time. In 1685, Narai changed the official calendar from *Chulasakkarat* (the Lesser Era–CS) to *Phutthasakkarat* (the Buddhist Era–BE); AD 1685 was equal to BE 2228 instead of CS 1046. From Phaulkon, the Dutch understood that the reason for this action was that the King had reached his fifty-second year, and considered himself the ‘fifty-second King’ of Siam; therefore, he felt compelled to follow Siamese royal tradition by doing something which would be associated with him in posterity. Consequently, this too was part of the agenda of the King’s search for glory.¹³⁵ Again, the Dutch reported this change of era as a matter of fact. It was important to them to understand the system, because the letters and other documents from the Ayutthayan court were dated in the local fashion.

Apart from the traditional interests which the Thai Kings had in European military and navigational technology, King Narai was interested in European astronomy and horology, and he made use of his position to access both the knowledge and the instruments associated with them. The ruler possessed European-style clocks which were a new form of time measurement in Siam. They were supplied by the Dutch as early as the 1650s and later by the French.¹³⁶ Unfortunately, we do not know how much the Western system was actually used by the Ayutthayan elite. The French Jesuit astronomers, who came to Ayutthaya with De Chaumont’s embassy, significantly promoted the King’s fascination with Western

astronomy. Having learned from their experience at the Chinese court, they tried to sell Narai their faith through science and to conquer his soul and his knowledge.¹³⁷ Louis XIV also sent the Siamese King globes depicting the heavens and earth as well as an orrery, a model displaying the relative motions of the sun, the moon, and the planets. The French at least succeeded in capturing his fascination: Narai had two observatories built in Ayutthaya and Lopburi for the use of the Jesuit astronomers and even participated in their observations of lunar eclipses in the second half of the 1680s.¹³⁸ All these needed expertise and access to the latest and expensive equipment. Obviously, while the VOC supplied the Siamese court with navigational skills and time-measuring devices, it could not and did not want to compete with the French in this field.

Conclusion

King Narai's openness to foreignness and his search for glory in posterity and in the wider world are central elements in the life of his court and were evident to the Dutch observers. He wanted to experience the larger world, which he and his country had become part of and to which they needed to accommodate the changes it imposed upon them more empirically. An important difference from King Prasatthong was that, in a conflict situation, rather than intimidating the VOC into concession, King Narai sought compromise and used diplomacy as a solution. He surely felt the rising power of the High Government in Batavia in the region. But the growing number of foreign contacts which he had made also reduced the dependency of Siam on the Dutch Company.

The Dutch more or less coped with the 'demoted' position—especially in terms of diplomatic prestige—they now acquired and were fairly satisfied with their function as indispensable supplier in material and services to the court. Admittedly, in the later stages, the Dutch were affected by the French competition, but they had learnt how to behave politically in Siam. While the French and the Persians attempted to introduce the 'different'—religion and diplomatic protocol—, the Dutch tried to adjust and be neutral or at least non-interventionist.

After all, Narai's foibles were short-lived. His diplomatic expansion did not effectuate any major shift in the idea or functioning of Siamese kingship. It contained much of the 'element of play', which reflected the King's personal attitudes. Consequently, it survived only as long as the King himself. His liking for foreigners was exploited. Whereas the previous Kings had used Europeans as ornaments to their grandeur and fame, King Narai used them to exercise power as administrative officials but quickly lost control over them. The fact that the King was dying without

an able heir to the throne created a potential hotbed for political contests. His kingdom was confronted not only with a possible seizure of power by the conspiracy between the French and Phaulkon, but also by one of his leading officials, Okphra Phetracha and co-conspirators who had been building up their force biding their time to act out the Palace Revolution in 1688.

CHAPTER SIX

REDEFINING THE RELATIONSHIPS: THE DUTCH AND THE COURT OF KING PHETRACHA

Introduction

In 1688, the throne of Ayutthaya was once more contested with recourse to violence. This time, it was usurped by one of King Narai's most prominent officials, Phra Phetracha. He fought against and triumphed over not only rivals at court but also an external force, the French. The earlier historiography has seen the Palace Revolution as an extreme expression of xenophobia among the Siamese elite in response to the growing French power in the kingdom, and its occurrence was believed to have marked the beginning of the shift to 'isolationism' in Ayutthaya. Hutchinson went so far as to accuse Siam after King Narai's reign of having 'a spirit of blind and arrogant self-sufficiency'. He considered the revolution an epoch-making event because the reactions of its connivers were responsible for 'an obstinate fanaticism' in the coming centuries which deprived Siam of the chance to learn from the progress of the Western world.¹

The recent historiography of Ayutthaya has undermined such notions as that King Phetracha was a violently xenophobic ruler and that his reign completely deprived Ayutthaya of its openness to the outside world. Wyatt has pointed out that, while xenophobic sentiments were essentially a factor which mobilized popular support for the 1688 Uprising, the leaders of the movement were driven by a more pragmatic motive, namely considerations of power. These members of the Siamese elite had less to worry—in any case than the Buddhist clergy—about the presence of the French Roman Catholic missionaries who, since their arrival in the early 1660s, had gained almost no following among the indigenous population. They must have felt more threatened by the presence of the French military force in the kingdom. Wyatt argues that Siam did not reject the outside world but preferred a more manageable and perhaps traditional level of contact.² By tracing the trading activities of post-1688 Siam mainly in the VOC records, Dhiravat and Remco Raben have demonstrated that Phetracha's kingship did not lead to isolationism in the commercial life of Siam, but rather presented a continuation or revival of royal trade with the commercial centres throughout Asia.³ Isolation would have been a completely opposite mind-set to the logic of the Siamese

court which sought to accumulate wealth—the base of power—through taxing revenues from international trade.

Admittedly, the 1688 Uprising did not usher in a social, structural revolution but a change of dynasty; it indeed confirmed the existing political culture of contest for wealth and power between the *chao* and the *khunnang* in Ayutthaya politics.⁴ As had those of his predecessors, King Phetracha's policy concentrated on maintaining and strengthening the centrality of kingship by accentuating the King's patronage of Buddhism, by instituting administrative reforms and tightening control over the officials, and by monopolizing trade. In Raben's assessment, the reign of King Phetracha should not be seen as a period of decline but one of 'accommodation and reform', in which the monarch attempted to consolidate his power and redefine his relationship with the world.⁵

The consolidation of royal power and the redefinition of the court's relationship with the world were implemented at two levels: external: foreign trade and relations; and internal: the political life of the Siamese court. At the external level, there were differences from King Narai's reign. First, Phetracha's martial activities were directed towards suppressing the opposition to his rule, not towards expanding his territories. Secondly, despite the continuing significance of international trade as a source of royal power, diplomacy now lost the prominence it had accrued during the previous reigns, as the means to define the relationships between Ayutthaya and the outside world. Phetracha's court was not known for receiving or sending out any 'grand' embassies. Yet, the VOC reports from the early years of the reign show a picture of a ruler who mastered communication with the foreigners—the Dutch in this case—in his own way. However, this image of the friendly King would soon fade from the Dutch perception to be replaced by that of an 'anti-European' sceptic. This was not just a reflection of his changing relations with the Dutch/Europeans. It was also a part of a broader transformation of King Phetracha's personality and policy in response to his position in internal politics. This chapter focuses on Dutch observations of the King's redefinition of interpersonal relationships at his court—in other words, how Phetracha, who had successfully fought his way into the centrality of politics in Siam, interacted with and tried to have control over his 'human environment'.

The Palace Revolution of 1688

It is not my purpose here to give a detailed reconstruction of the 1688 Palace Revolution and its immediate aftermath, especially the expulsion of the French, as these have been attempted by other scholars using Thai,

French, and Dutch sources.⁶ By using the contemporaneous 'Succinct Account' attributed to *Opperhoofd* Johannes Keijts, supported by his other VOC reports, I shall try to show how the Dutch understood the revolution, and how they perceived its effect on their relationships with those involved in the event.⁷ This should serve to prepare us to comprehend the initial relationship between Phetracha and the Dutch as well as intimating the troubles lying ahead.

Although the various sources do not agree in every detail concerning the backgrounds, motives, and methods of those involved in the power struggle of 1688, the main line of the event can be traced as follows. During the terminal illness of King Narai between April and July 1688, the powerful faction at court led by Okphra/Phra Phetracha and his son Luang Sorasak succeeded in eliminating Phaulkon, the King's 'adoptive son' Phra Pi, as well as Narai's younger half-brothers, Princes Aphaithot and Noi. Phetracha and Sorasak had already been recognized by La Loubère as powerful pretenders to the throne in 1687. Their family had been allied to Narai's family in several ways, especially via their women-folk. Phetracha's mother had been one of Narai's wet nurses. One of his sisters was a consort of Narai, whereas a sister of the King had raised Sorasak. As the Commander of the Royal Elephants, Phetracha was well supplied with manpower when the revolution took place. He was also known for his devotion to Buddhism. With the overwhelming support which Phetracha enjoyed from the *khunnang* as well as the *sangha*, who were disturbed by the influences of Phaulkon and the French Roman Catholics, he was able to usurp the Siamese throne without any notable resistance.⁸ With his enthronement, the French-Siamese relationship came to a bitter end: the French troops were expelled and those left behind, being French and/or Roman Catholic, were subjected to cruel treatment.

The 'Succinct Account' starts with the situation in Siam in early 1688 prior to the death of King Narai. Although the monarch was residing in Lopburi, the city of Ayutthaya itself was unusually strongly guarded. This ignited the rumour of the King's demise and aroused great anxiety among the officials. *Opperhoofd* Keijts believed that Phaulkon had a plan to support the King's 'adopted son' claim to the throne. With the help of Phra Pi's father, Okkhun Kraisitthisak, the two managed to assemble up to 14,000 men. On the other side, it was to Okphra Phetracha that, according to Keijts, the sick King had transferred the principal governing of the kingdom. As part of his attempt 'to quell the disorder', Phetracha had the 'most seditious' people arrested, including Okphra Chula who was a Moor, a creature of Phaulkon. There he stopped, waiting to see how Narai's condition developed, and consequently allowed his opponents to go ahead with their plan.

As the King's health deteriorated, Keijts discerned increasingly open hostility towards Phaulkon among Siamese *khunnang*.⁹ He described the attitude of the Siamese towards the Greek in these words: 'He [Phaulkon] saw himself without support and ill-regarded by several grandees, jealous of his authority and [antagonized] by his pride which deserved punishment.'¹⁰ Meanwhile, Phaulkon tried to convince the King to allow the French soldiers to guard him. However, Phetracha was more successful in convincing Narai of the Greek's predatory intentions. The French were ordered to retreat before they arrived in Lopburi.

The 'treason' plotted by Phaulkon and Phra Pi was discovered in a most peculiar way: by being overheard by Sorasak and one of the King's consorts in a palace bedroom at night! Since the French had had to retreat, the Greek kept away from court, but even that raised suspicion about his evil plans among his opponents. Phaulkon was summoned to court and arrested on 19 May. Then, another official was arrested and found to be carrying a document outlining the entire plot, signed by Phra Pi, Phaulkon and other conspirators, to kill the popular Chaofa Noi, along with Phetracha, his son, and several officials, after King Narai's death. Confronted with the confiscated 'evidence', King Narai no longer had means to save the lives of his favourite courtiers.

Phra Pi was decapitated immediately and his head and body were shown to Phaulkon. The Greek tried to reconcile the Siamese by advising the French troops to depart from Siam, but this did not save his life. Keijts relates the humiliations Phaulkon was forced to endure from the hostile Siamese mob 'who followed him, teasing and mistreating him' on the path to the execution ground. His body was cut into three parts and dug up from the ditch by dogs over night. Having eliminated his Greek opponent and deterred the French, Phetracha was now confident enough to reveal his ambition clearly. Although the two surviving half-brothers of King Narai seemed to enjoy support from some officials who wanted one of them to assume the throne, Phetracha was able to engage strong troops and even have both princes killed. Keijts implied that this was the price Narai had to pay for his own murder of his uncle, King Sisuthammaracha in 1656.¹¹ Upon hearing this news, King Narai was so overcome by grief that 'he became incapable of taking action, was unable to speak, and died of dropsy two days later', in the night of 11 July 1688. Keijts paid a final tribute to the great King, 'being about 55 years of age when he died, after he had governed this kingdom in peace ... for 31 years, 8 months and 14 days with the greatest glory and reputation, among the great and the humble. So was the end of this great King of Siam, Ligor, Tenasserim, Sukhothai and Phitsanulok, and the Suzerain of Cambodia, Johor, Patani and Kedah.'¹²

Keijts seems to suggest that King Narai did not approve of Phetracha's

seizure of power, writing that, before his death, the King had given the 'royal sceptre', the symbol of the right to rule, to his only daughter, Kromluang Yothathep, 'perhaps in order to show that he did not accept that the Crown was taken by the person who now wears it [Phetracha], or to create another party powerful enough to oppose him.'¹³ Yet, with the King's death, no other opponent was now left to keep Phetracha from claiming the throne. Without meeting any resistance, Phetracha seized the 'royal sceptre' and the authority over the kingdom. While making his way to Ayutthaya 'according to the old custom', the new King abandoned the Lopburi court for good by donating the palace to monks, the seminary founded by Phaulkon, the Collegium Constantinum, to the Chinese, and other buildings previously used by Europeans, such as the English and the French envoys, to the newly promoted Siamese officials.¹⁴ The property of the Greek in Ayutthaya was also given away. On 1 August, Phetracha proceeded to the capital in a grand water procession, accompanied by a large number of gilded *prahu*, escorting the body of King Narai. Keijts emphasizes that the Dutch sailed about eight or nine miles up the river to welcome the King-to-be and that they were the only European nation to do so. To enhance their prestige, the Dutch distributed pieces of cloth and petty cash to the people on the way. King Phetracha ascended the throne on that same day. He adopted the strategy of his predecessor Prasatthong by aligning himself with the daughter of the late King. The *Opperhoofd* gossiped that Phetracha's marriage to the twenty-year-old Kromluang Yothathep made his old first wife very unhappy.¹⁵

During the disturbances in Lopburi, the Dutch in Ayutthaya closely followed the situation of the other foreigners as well. While depicting the difficult situation of the other Europeans in Siam, Keijts emphasized that the Dutch had found favour with Phetracha. He noted that the Europeans in Lopburi were closely guarded, with the exception of the VOC court surgeon Brochebourde, and his two friends, a goldsmith and a soldier. (Actually, a few French doctors were left free as well.) In the capital, the first attack on the French started on 9 July: the Siamese plundered the French camp and abducted one priest.¹⁶ The French commander in Siam, General Desfarges, whose two sons were held hostage in Lopburi in the company of Bishop Laneau, refused to surrender the fortress in Bangkok to the Siamese. Consequently, Phetracha sent soldiers to block the river mouth. The *Opperhoofd* claimed the credit for having prostrated himself in front of the *Okphra* and successfully convincing him to spare the commander's sons from being blown apart by cannons in sight of Bangkok. They were returned to their father, in whom, according to the Dutch, the Siamese found no compassion and mercy for his own children. Meanwhile, the English and the Portuguese were placed under

surveillance for fear that they might assist the French. When two mestizo Portuguese disguised in Siamese clothes were arrested for spying for the French, Phra Phetracha had the bearing of arms by the Portuguese forbidden and their (and those of other Europeans) children born of 'Siamese and Chinese' mothers taken away to the palace. Again, Keijts claimed that the new King granted him his wish that these Eurasian children be returned to their disconsolate mothers. However, before they could be returned to the bosom of their families, they had already been distributed as slaves to the courtiers, with the exception of the daughter of the former head of the English factory, Robert Harbin, who was saved by Daniel Brochebourde. The *Opperhoofd* took this opportunity to reproach the French again: 'These poor innocents became slaves, and paid miserably for the French who, by their malice, their bad faith and disgraceful habits, concerned themselves little with these misfortunes.' Some Portuguese priests also sought refuge in the VOC lodge but the Dutch could not protect them.¹⁷

What is noticeable in Keijts' account, and what distinguishes it from Westerwolt's report of the succession conflicts in 1656, is the author's partiality. This is not to say that partiality was unusual: Schouten and Van Vliet (who followed the former in many points) had betrayed sympathy with the ill-fated family of King Songtham. The friendship between Phetracha and the Dutch was undoubtedly based on their mutual hostility towards Phaulkon and the French. In his letter of 21 May 1688, the *Okphra* had already confirmed his favourable inclination towards the Dutch also saying that he was acting against the French, 'who had so cruelly offended the king [Narai] as a reward for all the friendship, concessions and privileges he had accorded them'.¹⁸ Keijts seems eager to defend Phetracha: that he was actually not blood-thirsty and not eager to take revenge on the innocent (which he indeed did, to the Eurasian children) but 'wished to show to everyone that the Siamese were people of good faith and had justice on their side, having been offended and mistreated in their own country by thankless creatures'.¹⁹ In a way, the French made the same mistake that the Dutch had made when dealing with Okya Sombattiban: making themselves totally dependent on a single *khunnang*. Especially so, as the foundation of Phaulkon's power lay purely in King Narai's favour and not in the control of manpower as that of other indigenous high-ranking officials.

At the same time, when Phetracha was trying to recruit the Company men should there be a confrontation with the French, the Dutch held adhered to their policy of non-involvement and avoided committing themselves. Some French implied the role of the Dutch in the Palace Revolution: Brochebourde was said to have poisoned King Narai to hasten his death, by order of Keijts and Phetracha,²⁰ and the Dutch were said

to have supplied arms to the Siamese to fight the French.²¹ While the Dutch without doubt hoped for the elimination of Phaulkon and French influence in Siam, there is no evidence in Dutch sources suggesting any personal interest of the VOC or Keijts in becoming so deeply involved as to assassinate King Narai. The second accusation is difficult to determine, since the VOC had always been one of the most important arms suppliers to Siam.

While contemporary French sources portray Phetracha as cruel, cunning, and ambitious, Keijts wrote that the new King had no choice but to assume the throne because he was already too deeply involved and too concerned with his own reputation and survival to allow others to administer power.²² At the end of the 'Succinct Account', Keijts gives a positive description of the new ruler.

This new king governs without opposition and rules to general surprise with all the absolute authority of every potentate in the Indies. He is liked, because he was compared to the corrupt conduct of Faucon and because he did not wish to attempt the life of the king like other pretenders and, on the contrary, supported him and attended to his safety, to which the regard he had for the people greatly contributed, as the opposition he raised to Faucon who was their enemy, overburdening them with taxes, which he promised to rescind for three years.²³

Whether Phetracha was sincere or not, he apparently gained the support of the Siamese through his display of loyalty to King Narai, his devotion to Buddhism, and the policy of tax exemption which made him the opposite of the treasonous, Roman Catholic, and greedy Phaulkon.

A 'Mutual Disappointment'

As a result of King Narai's declaration of war on the English East India Company and the Palace Revolution of 1688, the beginning of King Phetracha's reign saw the expulsion of the French, as well as the departure of any remaining English from Siam.²⁴ Initially, his succession improved the political and commercial situation of the Dutch, who now assumed the position of his most important foreign ally, even without having actually delivered any actual help. Phetracha almost immediately granted the VOC renewals of the Dutch-Siamese Treaty of 1664 and the Tin Accord of 1672.²⁵ But the alliance was based not only on the commercial significance of the Dutch Company, it also had a foundation of a shared anti-French outlook and policy. It was a time for the Company employees in Ayutthaya to breathe more easily; the King's friendliness nurtured their hopes of being able to do their business more comfortably and reinvigorated their sense of self-confidence. The confidence of the Dutch in the

King's favour also had much to do with the role of Daniel Brochebourde as an intermediary between the Company and the monarch.

At the first official encounter between the Dutch and Phetracha as King, the latter appeared on his favourite mount, a horse, to give the departing Keijts a farewell audience and his successor, Pieter van den Hoorn (1688-91), a welcome audience. On that occasion, Keijts was appointed Okluang Aphaiwari and had a gold betel box bestowed on him for his 'competence and goodness'. In addition to the usual insignia, the King gave him two gowns made of gold- and silver-flowered cloth, a gold chain, a gold kris, and a Thai-style hat with gold band. Van den Hoorn also received the title Okluang Wisitsakhon and a gold betel box, which he was obliged to carry with him whenever he attended a court ceremony. The monarch asked the Dutchmen what presents would please the Governor-General. Keijts and Van den Hoorn gave him the customary reply that whatever the King wished to give would be gladly accepted by their superior. However, in the letter to Batavia, they confided that they were rather afraid to name any specific gifts for the Governor-General; not only would the reputation of the Dutch be tainted as being greedy, but they feared even more that obligations to the King might augment in relation to the gifts received from Siam. Nevertheless, they concluded that the friendliness of the new King showed that he considered the Dutch truly an ally and that he understood that the VOC was strictly interested in trade—and not political intervention in Siam.²⁶ Afterwards Van den Hoorn, was sworn into office in the presence of some Siamese noblemen sent by the King.²⁷

The first letters from the new King and the new *Phrakhlang*, 'Kosa Pan' who was the brother of Kosa Lek and who had been King Narai's first Ambassador to France in 1686-7, sent to Governor-General Joannes Camphuys (1684-91) at the beginning of 1689 deserve closer attention for the way they portrayed King Phetracha to the Dutch. These missives, especially that of the Minister, officially informed Batavia of the decease of King Narai as a consequence of sickness and the subsequent succession of King Phetracha. In his letter, the Minister blamed the late Phaulkon for the ruthless abuse of foreign merchants in Siam as well as for the empty royal treasury and accused him of having organized a conspiracy against the dying King, with 'the French, the English, the Chinese, and some Siamese military officials'. The Minister stated that it had been Phetracha's intervention which had led to King Narai's decision to demote and punish Abdu'r-Razzaq, who had caused the Dutch so much misery in the early 1660s. By emphasizing that Phetracha had now got rid of Phaulkon, he apparently wanted to say that the new ruler had saved the Dutch for the second time. The King and the *Phrakhlang* praised the Dutch for their 'good behaviour'—the latter's neutrality during the 1688

upheaval—and, at the same time, promised they would favour the Company.²⁸ At that moment, the friendship of the Dutch was apparently so important that the usurper King needed to justify himself to them.

Besides these friendly missives, the Siamese court showered lavish gifts on the Governor-General which consisted of almost thirty pieces of gold-work, including a gold crown with precious stones, a royal sword adorned with rubies, and sets of gold betel boxes. The VOC men showed their sensitivity to the political situation of the new reign in their policy of gift-giving towards Siam. On the recommendation of Keijts and Van den Hoorn, the High Government in Batavia divided and distributed its presents to the Siamese court in the following manner: two-thirds of the total value was given to the King, and one-third to his son. The Dutchmen in Ayutthaya were very well aware of the status of the powerful Sorasak, now the *Wangna* Prince.

The Siamese court and the VOC continued exchanging information regarding the French movements in both Asia and Europe. In Ayutthaya, the Dutch were cautious not to compromise the King's favour in matters concerning the French. The instruction from Batavia to its employees there was to keep their distance from the French, while observing them carefully. According to the Dutch, in January 1689, the Portuguese Jesuit João Baptista Maldonado pleaded for help from the Dutch, whom he believed to be in favour with King Phetracha, in speaking up for the release of the miserable French prisoners and for a loan from the Company. He even asked the Dutch to stand bail for the French Bishop. But Van den Hoorn refused to help the French on the grounds that it was too risky to intervene in this still very sensitive issue and it was not in the Company's interest to meddle in the political affairs of Siam. During the first popular rebellion against King Phetracha near Ayutthaya and the unrest in Tenasserim in 1689, the French prisoners in Siam had to suffer a great deal because they were put back in chains after having enjoyed a little freedom. Probably the court was afraid that these Frenchmen or their supporters might take advantage of the confusing situation to free them. In spite of their treatment, King Phetracha was not blindly anti-French. In the face of the possibility that French ships under the command of Desfarges might attack Phuket in August 1689,²⁹ the court asked the VOC to allow René Charbonneau, the former French Governor of Phuket, to reside in the Company *kampong*. The Dutch believed that Charbonneau had been an opponent of Phaulkon and was critical of the wrongdoings of other Frenchmen. Knowing that this Frenchman had never been jailed or punished by King Phetracha and was even popular among the grandees for his modest and civil behaviour, the Dutch gave permission. Van den Hoorn presumed that the reason for this request was that, should Desfarges attack Phuket, the court would take

revenge on the French in Ayutthaya, therefore the King wanted to put Charbonneau in a 'safe place'.³⁰ This shows that the Dutch settlement was considered a safe haven. Although the Dutch-Siamese Treaty had forbidden the Dutch to attack any ships in Siamese waters, King Phetracha gave them written permission to treat the French in his realm with hostility after the news of the outbreak of the Franco-Dutch war of 1689 had been confirmed.³¹

The above-mentioned audience accorded Keijts and Van den Hoorn at the end of 1688 is likely to have been the last time that any Dutch trade director had a chance to attend a personal audience with King Phetracha. This situation was different from the 1630s: King Prasatthong had been willing to interact with the Dutch—his most important European ally—in formal audiences and during court ceremonies. Even as his most important foreign ally, the Dutch who no longer had direct access to Phetracha consequently needed an intermediary and they had one in their Huguenot physician.

The versatile Daniel Brochebourde continued serving the Siamese court under the new King. He had not only knowledge of Western medicine but also possessed business and linguistic skills acquired during his service with the VOC and his long stay in Siam. We know that he had participated in the valuation of Louis XIV's presents to King Narai in 1685, and that he often served as an interpreter for both the Siamese Crown and the Dutch Company. During the first few years of King Phetracha's reign, his significance to the VOC lay mostly in the fact that he now more than ever played the role of middleman between the Siamese King and the Dutch to the full. The *dagregister* kept by Van den Hoorn from January to October 1689 indicates that, like his predecessor, King Phetracha regularly held conversations with Brochebourde, whom he addressed with the Dutch professional title of 'meester' (master).³²

The Ayutthaya *comptoir* often sent Brochebourde to court for the purpose of gathering news which would give the Dutch the advantage of being able to move first and effectively. Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that what the *Opperhoofd* learnt via the physician was what King Phetracha knew or, often, particularly wanted the Dutch to know, aware that Brochebourde would transmit the message. The King repeatedly told his physician that he greatly appreciated the Dutch and considered them his only European allies. In this way, Phetracha managed to entertain a fairly personal communication with the Dutch without having direct contact with them. On one occasion, the King reminded Brochebourde that he knew what his *Phrakhleng* had recently discussed with the Dutch *Opperhoofd*.

Unlike his two immediate predecessors, King Phetracha no longer asked the Company for active military assistance to suppress opposition

to his reign. Alerted by recent dangerous experiences with the English and the French, he consequently was chary of involving another European nation in the internal affairs of Siam. The court still needed the Dutch for its interactions with the outside world.

The VOC continued its traditional role in Siam, that of supplying luxury goods, delivering services and world news, especially from Europe, as well as assisting court agents and Crown junks overseas, though to a far lesser extent than during King Narai's reign.³³ From the beginning, Keijts noted that the new King did not like 'most of the foreign rarities' and that made it difficult to find the right presents for him.³⁴ Actually, Phetracha resumed the liking for foreign luxury goods that had long become an established feature of pre-modern Thai kingship. Yet, in contrast to Narai's taste for eccentric foreign items, his preference was rather for what was functional and not, or not necessarily, European. The goods ordered for and the gifts preferred by King Phetracha consisted of pretty basic objects, such as textiles, jewels, medicine, and exotic birds. Eyeglasses and clocks were still requested at his court. The VOC was indispensable to the procurement of Javanese horses, which were needed not only for military purposes but were also the King's favourite mounts. Phetracha even requested a large carriage with six black horses as a gift from the Dutch.³⁵ Although Phetracha did not have the curiosity for Western knowledge and inventions of his predecessor, he did not reject Western technology, especially munitions, outright. It was more a question of what he needed at any given time. On one occasion, at the request of the court, the Dutch offered a model of a crane to lift the heavy, 150–160-foot-long wooden beams which were to be used for Narai's cremation ceremony. However, King Phetracha also considered the models proposed by an Englishman and a Portuguese in Ayutthaya. Unfortunately, we do not know whether he chose any of these.³⁶

Counting on their commercial and political importance and Brochebourde's access to the King, the Dutch initially believed in the idea of the improvement of their position in the kingdom. However, the optimism was short-lived because the court and the Company were soon embroiled in bitter disputes over delivering and pricing goods, especially textiles and silver, and the settling of court debts. The overall relations between the VOC and the Siam of King Phetracha, especially the commercial ones, must be described as a 'mutual disappointment' as a result of the trade policy of Siam and external economic factors.³⁷ They were 'asymmetrical' because:

In Ayutthaya the VOC was compelled to submit to the wishes and caprices of the court; but in the international trade relations, at least in Southeast and South Asia, the king was almost completely dependent on the Dutch Company. The VOC found itself in a paradoxical situation: its trade inter-

ests in Siam decreased, but to the king the Company became an important key to the international commercial networks.³⁸

By 1691, the Siamese court must have perceived the French threat to be waning. Not only did King Phetracha release the French prisoners in Ayutthaya, but his *Phrakhlang* also sent an envoy to Pondicherry bearing letters to different French administrators and priests, offering peace and a renewal of the French-Siamese Treaty. At the same time, the French in India were told in 'private letters' (presumably from their compatriots in Ayutthaya) that the Dutch 'were no longer so well favoured at [the Siamese] court, that they were held accountable for breaking their word in relation to promises given to the king.'³⁹ If the Siamese court was really motivated to try to effect a reconciliation with the French by bruiting its discord with the Dutch, this was by no means uncharacteristic since its principal goal would have been to avoid being dependent on one European ally.

Despite such overtures, the French never managed to revive a full contact with Ayutthaya. France and Siam had lost interest in each other. What remained was the one-man effort of the French Jesuit Father Tachard. In 1699, he finally managed to appear before King Phetracha in the capacity of an ambassador. But all he could present was a ten-year-old letter from Louis XIV to the Siamese King (actually addressed to Narai), without any presents. Phetracha's reciprocation was equally formalistic—a letter replete with empty compliments.⁴⁰ King Phetracha apparently did not regard a diplomatic exchange with the King of France part of his aura of grandeur. The Dutch believed that the King and his courtiers in general were still hostile towards the French. In this atmosphere, the *Phrakhlang* who, as the Dutch believed, had nurtured a passion for France since his journey to that nation would not dare to assist the French. Especially as he had already been repeatedly subjected to the cruelty of the King.⁴¹

Just at this time of changing circumstances at court, the once effective intermediary of the VOC Daniel Brochebourde seemed to be losing his touch. The Company records after 1690/1 no longer mention the royal physician reporting important or insightful news. Having said that, there is always a possibility that he did indeed do so, but the reports, especially the *dagregisters* from this period, are not available to us. Probably, the relationship between him and the VOC soured after Van den Hoorn's harsh treatment of his son, Moses, who decided to leave the Company service.⁴² Coupled with the inaccessibility to King Phetracha created by his courtiers, the loss of Daniel Brochebourde as the only intermediary must have been a great disadvantage to the VOC. After Daniel's death in 1697, Moses Brochebourde took over his father's position as court sur-

geon, as Okphra Phaetosot, but he did not enjoy the privileged access to the King that his father had had. He was not allowed to go to the court without being summoned. Although Moses sometimes continued to serve the Company as an informant, he seemed to keep himself aloof from court affairs or, if he did have access to them, dared not tell what he knew, undoubtedly for fear of falling victim to court intrigues. During his long career at court, his father had certainly made some enemies, such as the man who became the *Phrakhleng* of 1702-3.⁴³

There were also other signs of deterioration in Phetracha's relationship with the Dutch. When *Oppelhoofd* Reinier Boom (1697-8) died in December 1698, the VOC in Ayutthaya asked whether the King would be disposed to send his officials to be present at his funeral according to the old custom, but the Siamese court did not send any representative at all.⁴⁴ Boom's successor, Gideon Tant (1699-1703), reported that, in 1698, the Company made a profit in its customary gift exchange with the Siamese court. It was an occasion so unusual that he had no explanation for this generosity on the part of King Phetracha, whom he otherwise disparaged as 'greedy'. He recommended that Batavia reciprocate the generosity of the King who was now described as being 'usually no friend of Europeans'.⁴⁵

In the end, the VOC did not really benefit from the French absence from Siam, because of its own commercial conflicts with the Siamese court, and because, without the French threat, there was one reason less for the Siamese to need the Dutch. A promising relationship born of their understanding during the Palace Revolution therefore ended far sooner than might have been expected. In the VOC reports after 1690, the Dutch retreated into the background as observers of the struggles at the court, where they had no friend and eventually only secondary informants. It is evident in Dutch sources that Phetracha's rule was threatened both by open challenges—popular rebellions and vassal revolts—, and by subtle manipulation by people around him.

The 'Talapoin' Rebellion of 1689

Despite his easy victory in the Palace Revolution, the political life of King Phetracha was much troubled by frequent unrest in different parts of the kingdom. The Thai royal chronicles refer to the uprisings in Ligor and Nakhon Ratchasima (or Khorat), and the Thammathian Revolt near Ayutthaya. The VOC sources mention other conflicts in the 1690s with the vassal states—Patani, Phatthalung, Kedah and Cambodia—as well. Although King Narai had left no male heir, the *chao* of the Prasatthong Dynasty still posed a threat to the new regime. Two of the above-men-

tioned rebellions were said to have been led by men who claimed to be a 'brother' of the late King. Throughout his reign, King Phetracha was constantly fighting against the popularity of and loyalty to the old dynasty. Since the revolt led by the monk Thammathian took place, as it were, on the doorstep of the capital, its development and effects on life in Ayutthaya were keenly documented by the Dutch. The report, which is integrated into the *dagregister* of Van den Hoorn, reveals some of the characteristics of popular uprisings during the Ayutthaya Period.⁴⁶

In early 1689, Siam was plagued by unrest in some outer provinces—Tenasserim and Ligor. Suddenly, the Dutch found that the capital city was alarmed by the threatening presence of arsonists, robbers, and murderers, and noticed that the Siamese authorities had guarded the city heavily. Okya Yommarat extended his operations into the foreign—Portuguese and Dutch—settlements, taking away some inhabitants for interrogation. At the same time, concerned about how well prepared the Dutch were to defend themselves, the *Phrakhleng* encouraged them to increase the number of employees in the lodge and seriously recommended a night watch. On this occasion, the VOC agreed to make a survey of the residents in its own *kampong* and to evict strangers from it. His awareness aroused, Van den Hoorn suspected that the Siamese were hiding something more serious. Meanwhile, the court tried to divert the people who had been demoralized by their fear of the menacing presence of criminals in and around Ayutthaya by holding a grand New Year celebration. The Dutch reported that all the temples in the whole country would be open to the public on the first day of New Year, something which had not happened in many years.⁴⁷

In March, Okya Yommarat captured twenty men, who were to be interrogated sharply by 'violent torture' about the rumours surrounding the surviving brother of King Narai. On the peaceful Sunday afternoon of 24 April, the interpreter Okkhun Songphanit rushed into the VOC lodge to report that, two hours earlier, Prince Sorasak and his suite had been 'surprised by an attack' launched by an unknown force during their excursion around a certain temple about two and a half miles from the city and close to the elephant corral north of Ayutthaya. The *Opperhoofd's* report and the Thai chronicles picture the role of Prince Sorasak in this episode differently. The chronicles recount that the Prince had learnt about the advance of the rebel force to Ayutthaya and the conspiracy among his own men in time and acted heroically by felling the elephant on which the leader of the rebellion was mounted.⁴⁸ Van den Hoorn reported that the Prince had managed, with difficulty, to escape and returned to report this to his father, in a state in which he was 'dropping down with shock and exhaustion'. Consequently, the King sent out Okya Mahamontri with 12,000 men to stop the hostile advance and crush the

enemy. All city gates were blockaded, and all streets and the Royal Palace as well as Prince Sorasak's residence were guarded. Rumour had it that the leader of the force was the surviving 'youngest brother' of King Narai, probably Chaofa Noi. The Dutch saw this attack as 'sudden and unexpected' and as a surprise to the common people who did not know which side to take—that of the ruling King or of the putative brother of the late King.

By five o'clock in the evening, in their lodge the Dutch heard the sounds of fighting. This launched a large-scale migration from the city. The river was, as far as one could see, congested with boats large and small fleeing downstream from the city. Within a few hours, the Dutch saw hardly anyone left except for the Portuguese who came to deposit small pieces of property, such as jewellery, gold and silver, in the VOC lodge, as they 'usually' did in this kind of precarious situation, in order to avoid arson and robbery.⁴⁹ The King demanded that six Portuguese constables come to serve at different posts and bulwarks around the city. In return, he released the daughters of Portuguese men fathered with indigenous women, who had been seized by the court in the previous year during the incident with the French. On the following day, as the battle continued, another wave of escapees left the city. Van den Hoorn dramatically described how the multitude of boats caused so much movement on the river that they stirred up spume as on the sea. Okkhun Songphanit decided to send his wife, who had served a brother of King Narai, to the elephant corral to gather news. She managed to visit the place where the outlaw force had been stationed the day before but reported that there were no longer any rebels there. However, she had heard from the villagers that they had caught a brief glimpse of the putative prince on elephant back before he disappeared from sight again. Van den Hoorn, unfortunately for us, omitted other stories told by the interpreter's wife because he regarded them as superstitious and not worth reporting.⁵⁰

On 26 April, Okya Mahamontri succeeded in defeating the rebels. One hundred men were killed; another 300 rebels and three elephants were captured and brought to the palace. The rest fled down the river or into the jungle.⁵¹ A few days later, Brochebourde provided the Company with information he had heard from the King himself. It appeared from the interrogation of the captured rebels that the leader of the rebellion was a Buddhist monk, 'talapoin' in Dutch usage, identified by the Thai chronicles as a certain Thammathian, a former retainer of the late Prince Aphaithot. From what the Dutch heard, he had committed a crime in Tenasserim and been sent to Ayutthaya, but escaped from his detention. The monk now claimed to be King Narai's brother who had been in hiding and was now ready to assume the throne. He gained the trust and support of 'stupid people'—many thousands, with and without arms—by

deceiving them with some 'magic tricks'. Van den Hoorn himself regarded the Siamese monks in general as the 'masters of magic and delusion'. Now that the rebellion had been crushed, the King declared that he expected that the 'talapoin' would soon be caught. At this point, Phetracha had said grinning: 'One should see if a man who is already dead can come back to life again.' In the night of 29 April, the King's prediction was fulfilled when the rebel monk was finally caught while asleep in the jungle. He was brought into the palace where he was put sitting at a junction, with his neck and breast tied up against a post, to be gazed at by the courtiers who regularly passed by.⁵² Because there were too many captives to deal with, the authorities burnt the soles of the most important rebels to prevent them from escaping.

Although the monk had already been detained in the palace for four days, against the King's expectations, some people continued to believe that Narai's brother was still alive and was approaching the city. Van den Hoorn warned the readers of his report not to be puzzled by the existence and persistence of this kind of rumour because the Siamese were 'credulous, gossipy and fanciful' people. Referring to the accounts of Van Vliet and Van Tzum, he also reminded his readers of similar episodes in the past of struggles between the adherents of a new and an old dynasty, which showed how the Siamese Kings assumed and maintained power by cruelly eliminating the family of their predecessors.⁵³ At long last, the 'talapoin' was vindictively executed—cut open alive—as recounted by Engelbert Kaempfer in his *Description of Siam* of 1690.⁵⁴

Manipulating the King: Court Members in Dutch Views

King Phetracha had won the throne but placed himself in a dilemma. He was certainly able enough to deter the initial reactions against his rule. Yet, he was constantly faced with subtle challenges from people surrounding him. Unquestionably, the King had a legitimacy problem on account of his un-royal origin. However, the most serious problem was the fact that he was dealing with a well-established and consequently rather strong group of administrators over whom he initially had little control. The Palace Revolution had destroyed the old *chao* but at the same time left strong *khunnang*. This was compounded by the fact that, from the beginning of his reign, royal power was virtually divided between the King and his politically experienced son, Prince Sorasak.

During the very early years of King Phetracha's reign, a certain degree of freedom of interaction between the local officials and the Dutch was evident. Van den Hoorn's diary of 1689 reveals an unusual picture of some *khunnang* going in and out of the Dutch lodge on an almost daily

basis. Okluang Wisitsongkhram, who was departing for Ligor, came to offer his services to convey their message to the Dutch residents there. Okphra Choduek appeared in the lodge with his secretary to write and seal the *tra* for the Dutch. He was received on the upper floor of the building and entertained with tea, preserved fruits, and Persian wine. Certainly, such visits were reciprocated with gifts.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, not all officials enjoyed this seemingly positive development. There were signs that the new King was putting pressure on the main ethnic groups of officials. Some Chinese had been accused of taking sides with Phaulkon. The officials of Moor origin also aroused the King's suspicion, as a result of the turmoil in Tenasserim and the 'talapoin' rebellion, in which some Moors were involved. The *Syahbandar* Okphra Ratchamontri, who was born of a Moor father and a Siamese mother, and two other peers were executed because they had sided with the rebellious monk.⁵⁶ The difficult situation of this group of *khunnang* was made apparent to the Dutch when Okphra Sinaowarat, the head of the Moor community in Ayutthaya, came to visit Van den Hoorn for an 'insignificant' chat. The *Oppelhoofd* believed that the *Okphra* wanted to show the Siamese that he was a good friend of the Dutch. This interpretation correlated with Van den Hoorn's confidence in the high status the Dutch were enjoying at the Siamese court at that time. Soon, the Dutch heard that the Moor Governor of Phitsanulok, 'Mameth Couli', had been replaced by a Siamese.⁵⁷ The Dutch claimed King Phetracha told Okphra Sinaowarat in the presence of many officials how ungrateful the Moors were, despite the favour and freedom they had been enjoying in Siam, privileges which they would not have had in their own land.⁵⁸

However, before we shall assume that King Phetracha was, again, xenophobic, the indisputable fact is that his hostility towards the Moors was both inconsistent and short-lived. The Dutch described the Moor official Okya Thepiata, who was the Commander of the Royal Elephants and a former favourite of King Narai, as belonging to Phetracha's close circle. After his return from the mission to resolve the turmoil in Tenasserim, the Dutch paid him a friendly visit at his residence. The King eventually gave all the surviving Moor rebels captured in 1689 to this *Okya*, instead of the head of their community, to be dealt with according to his own will.⁵⁹ Despite his momentary lapse, the reign of King Phetracha would soon see the return of the Chinese-Moor 'dual prominence' within Siamese bureaucracy as well as in commercial life. In 1690, when Van den Hoorn and Kaempfer presented the letters and gifts from Batavia to the *Phrakhleng*, they were escorted by two Siamese officials, a 'Hindustan' *Syahbandar* who was then the chief of the Moors, and a Chinese official (probably the Chinese *Syahbandar*).⁶⁰ The Siamese court and kingdom remained cosmopolitan.

The *khunnang* who took up the major administrative positions during the reign of King Phetracha consisted mainly of those who, because of their enmity towards Phaulkon and the French, had taken his side during the 1688 conflict. Since they had served King Narai, and probably the older generations even King Prasatthong, the strength of this group of officials lay in their administrative experience. Their expertise was required to ensure the consolidation of the new reign. At the same time, it allowed these officials to manipulate the administration. And it was precisely their connection to the previous reign which kept Phetracha suspicious of their intentions. The case of *Phrakhlang* Kosa Pan is an excellent example of this complexity.

In a way, Kosa Pan carried on a part of the spirit of King Narai's era—the fascination with the West. This former ambassador to France decorated his house with pictures of the French royal family and European maps and was fond of talking about what he had learnt of that country in conversations with the Dutch.⁶¹ He requested a full set of Dutch costume for his son as a gift. In 1689, when he was about to set off to lead the Siamese troops to suppress the unrest in Tenasserim, he asked for some medicine for his trip from the VOC surgeon. He also borrowed a spyglass from the Dutch to aid in the construction of the pagoda which would serve as a shrine for his late mother's ashes. The tool was meant to help the master builder, who was an old man with poor eyesight, have sight strong enough to reach the top of the structure. When the Dutch informed him of the outbreak of the war between them and the French at the end of 1689, Kosa Pan consulted a map in his possession which showed important port cities of Europe to ascertain the exact locations of the battles.⁶²

Notwithstanding his fondness for European culture which might have caused him to favour the Europeans, the *Phrakhlang* was in fact a shrewd businessman. The disputes between the VOC and the court of Ayutthaya were founded not only on the inevitable conflict of interests between the two trading organizations with a monopolistic tendency, but also between the Company and the individual officials who had their own personal commercial interests. His letters to the Governor-General were lengthy and discussed the disputes over trade between Ayutthaya and Batavia extensively. Between 1690 and 1691, rather personal disagreements between the Dutch and the *Phrakhlang* occurred on several occasions. The Minister forced the Dutch to exchange money only with him and not with other merchants in Ayutthaya. This violated the Dutch-Siamese Treaty which allowed the Dutch to trade with all traders in Siam. The Dutch accused the Minister of creating rumours and reporting to the King that the money which the VOC had delivered to the Crown was partly adulterated. They also believed that Kosa Pan and his second-in-command, Okya Phiphatkosa, who had earlier served Prince Sorasak,

were trying to make the Prince dislike them. To make matters worse, the Dutch were convinced that the *Phrakhlang* intentionally hindered the settlement of the court debt, which was growing, because he was afraid that his own corruption would be revealed. Kosa Pan even threatened to revoke the exclusive trading right of the VOC in Ligor tin and challenged the Company to employ force against Siam. The hopes of the Ayutthaya *comptoir* failed to materialize when the letters with formal complaints from the Governor-General to the King and his Minister failed to have any effect in prompting the court to pay its debt. In return, the *Phrakhlang* blamed the deteriorating relations between the Siamese and the Dutch on Van den Hoorn's impatience with bothering to observe local practice. Exhausted by bad health and recurrent quarrels with the local officials, Van den Hoorn asked for a replacement at the end of 1691 but died in Siam on 18 December of that year.⁶³

In 1692, Van den Hoorn's successor, Thomas van Son, sent an incisive report to Batavia about the changing situation in the kingdom which was to the disadvantage of the VOC. As a result of a conspiracy among the officials, it had become very difficult to gain access to the King, if not impossible altogether. First, the officials were—as they had always been—in every position to manipulate the translation and presentation of the Governor-General's letters to the King and also the formulation of his answers to Batavia. Secondly, no personal petition or request was now allowed to be presented to the monarch on the street or the water way on pain of incarceration or severe punishment, including the amputation of the petitioner's right hand. In so doing, the *khunnang* managed to deprive anyone in Siam of the last resource to gain a hearing from the King, a practice which even the Dutch had sometimes not shunned.⁶⁴

Although the Governor-General might consider the strict regulation imposed on the access to the King a common phenomenon among Asian rulers who saw it as a 'matter of glory', Van Son felt that the Siamese officials had worked hard to contrive this situation. He was also convinced that the *khunnang* tried to prevent any direct contact between the foreigners and the King because they wanted to control their own part in the foreign trade of Siam. In Van Son's words, these people decided when 'to close the window and open the door for those who were allowed to approach [the King]'. The *Opperhoofd* complained bitterly that the 'greedy' officials were abusing the Dutch in the matter of the tin trade worse than ever before. He also believed that the King was interested only in religious and military matters and had no interest in trade; therefore, he could easily be manipulated by his servants when commercial matters were concerned. The record of the junks fitted out in the King's name contradicts the notion that Phetracha held himself aloof from trade. Still, judging from his past career, he probably had little personal experience in

trade matters.⁶⁵ In the following year, Van Son once more complained that the 'abusive' officials had grown so confident in their doings that they did not even bother asking the King's permission for their actions. Even when the King punished them, it did not help contain their ambitions because amnesty could be bought. Having been gaoled more than twenty-five times within that year, Kosa Pan did not, according to the Dutch, rehabilitate his fraudulent behaviour and indulged in even greater enterprises. He and others 'accused of treason and conspiracy' had their lives spared after having paid fifty-five catties of silver.⁶⁶

Van Son also explained why the royal treasury had been emptied. He commenced by pointing out that Phetracha's court was not as splendid as those of the previous Kings—that is to say that the King could not afford the splendour. He thought that this had to do with the political situation at the beginning of the reign when the King had 'bought' all kinds of people's support. When he came to power, Phetracha had rewarded the important officials by increasing their revenues by one-third, besides reducing taxes for the commoners. Yet, he later revoked that provision and put the money into the royal treasury instead, but then this money only went to support the costs of the war with 'Phatthalung and Patani'. To illuminate this whole point, Van Son explained that the Siamese King usually did not pay his soldiers and gave no regular salary to his officials, but only rewarded them occasionally according to their merit. Pertinently he could take back at any time what he gave.⁶⁷

Lastly, Van Son criticized King Phetracha for not pressing for a decisive victory in the war with Patani, which he had begun with such vigour. The suspicion that the King seemed to have given up on this war not only gave people reason to think him beneath contempt, it also encouraged further rebellions among his vassals. Kedah had followed in the footsteps of Patani in refusing to pay tribute and even detained the King's envoys, with 200 men who had been sent earlier to secure their release. Van Son saw this as a logical consequence of the current state of Phetracha's kingship: 'How could he [King Phetracha] have any interest in foreign affairs, when he seems to have lost that for internal affairs?' Another cause for disquiet was that the King had ceded much of his authority to Prince Sorasak who had as much support among the courtiers as his father did. The Prince was so powerful that he was free to act according to his passions and desires, without fearing his father's intervention. Van Son predicted that Sorasak's growing strength would land the King in trouble. The Dutch hoped that the King would be able to keep control of his son and his officials because they feared that any change would affect the Company.⁶⁸ To sum up, the Dutch saw King Phetracha in 1692-3 as a ruler very much deprived of information and money, unable to offer courageous leadership.

The Purge of 1699

Around the end of the 1690s, the Dutch reports indicate important trends in the development of King Phetracha's personality and internal policy. Unquestionably, he experienced changes in his character and personal interests. Furthermore, the King tried to break free of the manipulation of his court members.

One minor incident prompted the Dutch to pay attention to the state of Siamese-Cambodian affairs. In January 1698, a Malay official of *okluang* rank who was in the service of Prince Sorasak ran amok and caused great panic in the city. Some Cambodian prisoners took advantage of this chaos to escape. Moses Brochebourde claimed that these Cambodians were the victims of a diplomatic row between Siam and its vassal state. Three or four years earlier, the King of Cambodia had requested Siam's protection against pirates. King Phetracha refused to meet his obligations as the suzerain, for reasons unknown to the Dutch at that time, but perhaps following the traditional Ayutthaya strategy of keeping its neighbour weak.⁶⁹ When a white elephant was discovered in Cambodia two years later, the Cambodian King 'took revenge' on his Siamese overlord by sending the animal to Lansang in return for the protection of this state.⁷⁰ Ayutthaya was outraged and demanded the animal. Instead, Cambodia sent around fifty *prahu* plus other gifts to Ayutthaya, saying that its King possessed an excess of these vessels and was willing to share some with the Siamese ruler. This infuriated King Phetracha even more and made him more determined to hold many of the Cambodians in this mission in custody until the white elephant had been delivered to him.

The Dutch reported that the Cambodian fugitives managed to cross the border into their own territory, whereas their Siamese pursuers were ambushed or fled back. King Phetracha now ordered preparations for war against Cambodia to be commenced and even announced that he would lead the army himself. This may have been all bluff as the King relinquished this plan, according to the Dutch, because he feared a strong Cambodian resistance. He opted instead to send a mission carrying gifts to Cambodia.⁷¹ Whether their information was correct or not, the Dutch observers seemed to suggest that King Phetracha was lacking the will to wage a war against his vassal. This had been the predominant trend in his foreign policy which had begun in the early years of the decade.

In internal affairs, the Dutch saw King Phetracha reclaim control by suppressing another popular uprising and purging his enemies at court. In his attempt to re-consolidate power, he now preferred to wield violence and strict control in his dealings with the officials whom he had bought with offices and wealth at the beginning of his reign. By 1698, the Dutch

were reporting that no officials dared order any textiles or other goods from the VOC because no one was sure whether he could keep it secret from the King, who would be outraged, or from his son who was even more feared. *Oppperhoofd* Boom commented that the court was in a state of 'discomfort and confusion'.⁷²

Phetracha's ultimate regaining of control came after the suppression of the rebellion in Nakhon Ratchasima which began around February 1699 and ended in April 1700. Around 17-19 February 1699, a civil war broke out when a hostile force took over Nakhon Ratchasima, which was not only a frontier town but also an important commodity centre in north-eastern Siam. The identity of the leader remains mysterious in all the sources. Thai chronicles suggest that he was the charismatic spiritual leader 'Bun Kwang'.⁷³ According to *Oppperhoofd* Tant, right up until September, popular rumour confusingly spread that the rebel leader was either Prince Sorasak, or (again) a surviving brother of King Narai, or even the secretary of the late King. Tant himself did not mention any holy man and also disregarded the rumour that the rebellion was led by King Narai's brother.⁷⁴

The general of the Ayutthayan force to Nakhon Ratchasima, Okya 'Lakhon', returned to the capital to ask for reinforcements, but instead he was suspected of intending to drive a wedge into the army. He and some other officials were locked up in a cage 'like civet cats'. After the *Okya's* suicide attempt failed, the King ordered him to be treated for his wounds, 'possibly to kill him afterwards in a crueller manner'. Fearing for his life, the second-in-command, Okya Phonlathep (a Japanese mestizo), decided to lead his men to 'Koenajock' (probably Nakhon Naiyok). Rumour had it that he intended to join the Cambodians in an attempt to close in on Ayutthaya from the south. At the same time, it was said that Patani, too, wanted to send troops to seize the fortresses in Bangkok. Despite all these other threats, Tant maintained that throughout the King was determined to recapture Nakhon Ratchasima.

Besides the unrest in the provinces, the situation at the Ayutthayan court confirmed the clear and present danger to King Phetracha. In his letter of January 1700, Tant reported the confusion which reigned at the court in Ayutthaya. On 9 January, a gunpowder works, which was located only seven or eight *roeden* (about 32-36 metres) away from the palace wall and where the war ammunition was produced, caught fire and blew up. The explosion even shook the Dutch lodge which was situated more than three-quarters of an hour away from the palace, with waterways in between. The fire burnt for three hours and left ten people dead and more than a dozen injured. The King was appalled because he had almost been hit by flying shrapnel as he was sitting in the ordinary audience hall. Tant explained that the petards were made of buffalo hides containing gun-

powder, smashed porcelain, and pieces of Chinese iron pans. Without having given any orders about how to deal with the disaster, Phetracha had the palace gates heavily secured and rode his horse from place to place within the palace, until the fire was quenched. (Probably, by being mobile, the King wanted to prevent the enemy from catching him.) Some people suspected that this was an act of arson organized by people in the King's own circle. Later, the explosives factory was removed to the north side of the palace, outside the city walls. The Dutch had already given 720 buffalo hides to the court for the purpose of making petards and now they were obliged to give one hundred more.⁷⁵

Though Thai and French sources are silent on this topic, Tant drew attention to speculation that the Nakhon Ratchasima rebellion had resulted from a conspiracy at the court in Ayutthaya which aimed to remove King Phetracha and replace him with Phra Khwan, his son born of Kromluang Yothathep, who would come of age in early 1699. The tonsure ceremony of Phra Khwan, Narai's only grandson, which lasted for nine days, was the only court celebration mentioned by the Dutch during Phetracha's reign. The ringleaders were believed to be Yothathep herself, who was known to be eager to bolster the claims of her son, and Kosa Pan.⁷⁶ Tant mentioned that the harsh treatments meted out by the King might have lured some officials into plotting against him as they desired a more compliant, young, and inexperienced king like Phra Khwan. This explanation is consistent with other tales about the relationships between the King and his courtiers as told by the Dutch.

The interpreter for the Dutch believed no matter which side won—the King or the Queen—it would not affect the Company's position in Siam.⁷⁷ In fact, it was the King who won both in Nakhon Ratchasima and at court. Nevertheless, the threat of rebellions and neighbouring kingdoms as well as the mounting tensions at court apparently had a deep impact on King Phetracha. Tant noted the change in the King's personality:

[The King] has transformed himself from a great pious man into a staunch tyrant; [the change] has brought [the situation] so far that he fears no one and is feared by everyone.

Since the 'discovery of the treason', the King withdrew himself almost completely from religion and devoted himself to worldly matters. Actually, this change had begun even earlier and persisted until his death. Already in 1698, Boom had remarked that King Phetracha now neglected State affairs and was interested only in such entertainments as boxing and kite-flying.⁷⁸ Shortly before his death, the King sent his courtiers to the *Susuhunan* of Mataram not just for the usual mission of buying horses, but also some beautiful female dancers and music instruments—his

most eccentric desired import the Dutch ever noted. Probably the reference is to performers of the *bēdhaya* dance which is one of the most sacred of all Javanese dance performances, and part of the royal regalia.⁷⁹ The King may have learnt about this from either the Siamese envoys to Java or royal factors who travelled there regularly to buy horses. Tant commented that the Siamese would not succeed in buying these dancers because it was not allowed to export Javanese into slavery!⁸⁰

Tant also remarked that King Phetracha had become more cruel than he had been at the beginning of his reign. Although the King had finally retaken the devastated city of Nakhon Ratchasima from the rebels, some smaller forces were still left to challenge him. The rumour still hovered around that the surviving rebels were conspiring with the rulers of Lansang, Ava, Pegu and others. Phetracha now employed violence against the civilian population in the war region as well. Besides the casualties of war, many 'innocent peasants' and 'local traders', who were suspected of treason, were tortured and brutally murdered, and their bodies were displayed around the city walls of Nakhon Ratchasima.⁸¹

At the same time, King Phetracha managed to attend to his enemies at his own court, too. He brutally persecuted many officials from old and distinguished families who had served King Narai.⁸² One of the most prominent victims of this brutality was the *Phrakhlāng*, whose tie with the old dynasty brought about his own downfall. After having been held in a palace and become seriously ill, Kosa Pan died on 15 November 1699, according to the Dutch.⁸³ After his death, the King openly treated his alleged ally, Queen Yothathep, very badly and once even beat her up.⁸⁴ The elimination of the officials of old families must have weakened the position of Narai's daughter. Phetracha had these officials replaced by his own favourites; though most of them were young and inexperienced, the advantage was that they would obey him. The new *Phrakhlāng* Minister was Okya Maha Amath, one of the King's greatest favourites. The Dutch considered him young, arrogant, inexperienced, and capricious.⁸⁵ But like their predecessors, Tant commented, these new officials continued exploiting the poor people, who submitted to their will hoping to be left in peace.⁸⁶ The destruction of the old, experienced officials and the subsequent rise to power of a new generation who lacked experience may partly explain why Phetracha and Sorasak abandoned their maritime trade activities around 1700.⁸⁷ Throughout these great changes, only the old Okya Phiphatkosa still remained in the office of Deputy-*Phrakhlāng*, but only because 'he was needed for his service rather than favoured'. He was the only person the Dutch could regularly contact (for their business) because he was hardly ever thrown into jail, unlike most of the grandees at that time.⁸⁸ Although they may have been unable to act, Tant blamed the current miserable state of the *khunnang* on their own attitude. No one

had the courage to confront the King about his wrongdoings and brutality afflicted on the officials and people because the Siamese, by virtue of their 'blind heathen belief', thought that it was necessary, just as a father had to discipline his children out of love. Moreover, they also believed that those who offended their master now would never enjoy the next life.⁸⁹ To do the Siamese justice, it should be borne in mind that their concern for the present life under the cruelty of King Phetracha may have been a more important motivation than fear of paternal strictness or the prospect of the next life.

The turmoil of 1699 and 1700 absorbed the entire attention of the court and the resulting scarcity of manpower also grew into a serious problem for the Dutch. The *Phrakhleng* could not finish loading the Dutch ships because he could not report this to the King who was occupied by the continual unrest.⁹⁰ According to the Dutch, in his attempt to suppress the rebellion, King Phetracha tried to enlist the help of foreigners in Ayutthaya, namely the Chinese, Moors, and Portuguese. 'Men under the Dutch jurisdiction'—presumably the residents of the Dutch *kampong*—were also included on this list. Adhering to its chosen policy in Siam, the VOC tried not to burn its fingers in this internal conflict and avoided lending arms and people even to the King. The Dutch maintained that they were merchants and not warriors.⁹¹ Tant believed that the Dutch would be safe, as long as they remained neutral, because the 'fear of foreigners'—he probably meant the foreigners' ability to defend themselves—was still strong among the Siamese.⁹²

The Change of the Reign, 1703

Although, by 1699-1700, King Phetracha had succeeded in crushing the rebellion in Nakhon Ratchasima and weakening the *khunnang*, his success did not change the fact that court politics continued to be dominated by different *chao* factions; it was, in Tant's words, 'a three-headed government'. Besides the King, there were two other power poles in Siam: Prince Sorasak, on the one hand, and Queen Yothathep on behalf of her son, Phra Khwan, on the other hand. Both held their own courts and had to be obeyed and, moreover, negotiated separately in matters of trade. To complicate the situation even more, they both collected separate taxes, and actively promoted the pursuit of their own courses.⁹³

The King was in a cleft stick in having to choose between Phra Khwan and Prince Sorasak as his successor. He seemed to favour his youngest son as seen from the way in which he had him guarded and personally taught him in statecraft, and, most importantly, tried to keep him away from his elder brother. At his coming of age, Phra Kwan was reported to have been

given a separate court with his own officials, troops, and revenues.⁹⁴ His popularity was certainly based on the fact that he was the only grandson of King Narai. Seeing that Phra Khwan, at fourteen, already showed a definite self-interest, Tant predicted that conflict between the two Princes was inevitable.⁹⁵

Whereas the Dutch considered the Yothathep–Phra Khwan faction an agreeable alternative, they and many others had much to fear from the King's eldest son. Besides having accumulated enormous experience as Phetracha's long-term closest ally, Prince Sorasak controlled the manpower of the household of the *Wangna* Prince. Moreover, he actively participated in foreign trade, sending his junks to Coromandel, Japan, and Batavia.⁹⁶ The French missionaries were afraid of his anti-Christian attitude and mentioned many of his cruel deeds.⁹⁷ The Dutch, too, held a far from high opinion of his character. Sorasak was known to lust after young girls and for his sadistic treatment of them, including daughters of people who lived around and worked for the VOC lodge. The Company could not protect these girls, although their parents asked it to do so.⁹⁸ To add to the family record, the VOC reported in 1697 that the nineteen-year-old daughter of Prince Sorasak was guilty of sexual misconduct by sleeping with male persons of low social status such as servants, actors and the like. Painting her portrait even more darkly, it was hinted she was reported to have slipped out of the palace disguised in men's clothes. When her governess told her father about it, he ordered that seven cuffs be slapped on the Princess. This revelation distressed not only her father but also her grandfather, especially when the scandal broke in the midst of an auspicious occasion: the tonsure ceremony of a son of the Prince.⁹⁹

Though seen by many as very powerful, Prince Sorasak did not have a completely smooth career. At a certain point in the mid-1690s, the Dutch had the impression that he seemed to have lost his father's favour.¹⁰⁰ During the turmoil of 1699–1700 and the rumour that he was the leader of the Nakhon Ratchasima Uprising, the behaviour of the Prince, who kept to his own palace, was a mystery to everyone. In the midst of the news of his wife's death in July 1699 and the illness of his mother, the rumour of his own death was being spread around. But Okya Phiphatkosa and Okya Sombattiban as well as the court interpreters for the Dutch insisted that he was alive. Moses Brochebourde said that the Prince, though alive, was paralysed.¹⁰¹ When Sorasak married a princess of Lansang in April 1702, the Dutch heard people speculate that during the time that he had been rumoured to be dead, he was actually in Lansang with an embassy sent by the King to propose to this princess.¹⁰²

Although it is not entirely clear from the VOC sources why Prince Sorasak was disgraced in the second half of the 1690s, he later managed to regain a position in his father's good graces. The Dutch claimed he was

even able to block news of any State affairs or for that matter, of his own undertakings, from reaching the King's ears. The Dutch description of Sorasak's self-reinvention, which occurred just in time to restore him before his father's eventual death, is revealing.

We believe ... that the King, while still alive, has no other option [than] that the eldest son will certainly take over the kingdom, principally if he [Sorasak] keeps on with his present behaviour, because one now begins to love and glorify him [for] this [which is] completely contrary to his former [behaviour]. [He is] everywhere renowned for clemency, generosity and just goodness. Yes, even though the local people have been afraid of [him] in the past.¹⁰³

The death of King Phetracha came on the evening of 5 February 1703. According to Tant, the King took, at his own request, a purgative which was said to have had the effect of precipitating his death. Prince Sorasak succeeded in seizing control of the court and ensuring his own accession to the throne.¹⁰⁴ Immediately after Phetracha's death, Tant, who was leaving Ayutthaya for good, predicted that the end of Phra Khwan was now imminent. It was his successor, Aarnout Cleur (1703-12), who resumed the task of documenting what actually happened. His 'Relation of What Occurred upon the Sickness and Death of the Siamese King Named Phra Trong Than [Phetracha]' is based on a story told by an unnamed courtier.¹⁰⁵

According to Cleur's account, Phetracha had been trying to keep his illness secret. He was unsuccessful and Queen Yothathep had learnt of it and immediately gathered her helpers to secure her son's succession. The most important among them was Okya Sombattiban, the Chinese favourite of the King.¹⁰⁶ When the illness of the King was too severe to be kept secret any longer, Sorasak decided to remain in the Royal Palace and had it surrounded by 3,000 armed men from his own force. The King, knowing his own death was imminent, tried to make Sorasak promise not to do Phra Khwan any harm.

After the King's death, Sorasak's first step was to weaken his opponents. He commenced by demoting Okya Sombattiban, whom he had ordered to be arrested even before his father's death. The *Phrakhlang* was also incarcerated and his place taken by Okya Phetburi. Okya Phiphatkosa again survived this political reshuffle and was even promoted to the more prominent position of Okya Phonlathep.¹⁰⁷ Sorasak had himself crowned by a sister of King Narai, a 'bagijntje' (beguine—a woman who had chosen to retire into a convent without taking full religious vows) who had raised him, Kromluang Yothathip. The new ruler, known as King Sūa, first avoided doing anything to offend Narai's memory. He treated Phra Khwan with care, calling him Chaofa Noi, which meant in this instance 'the young King'. He also claimed that he had no intention of ruling but

was obliged to do so now on account of his brother's youth and inexperience.

Meanwhile, the Queen and her helpers were plotting to assassinate the new King; the deed was to be done by the first page of Phra Khwan. The plot was betrayed to King Süa by a maid-of-honour of the Queen. The woman allegedly wanted to revenge herself on Yothathep for having punished her following her false accusations of other people.¹⁰⁸ The King's faction waited patiently, devising a plan to encourage the young Prince to go horse-riding. On 6 and 7 April, King Süa led his teenage brother on horseback to pay their respects to King Phetracha's body. At the King's encouragement, Phra Khwan rode on towards one of the royal treasuries situated within the walls of the Royal Palace. There four trusted officials of the King forced him to dismount and executed him. The 'Relation' recounts Phra Khwan asked to be beheaded at once instead of suffering slowly being clubbed to death. His request was refused on the grounds that it would be against time-honoured custom to shed royal blood. In the end, he was given the *coup de grace*. Phra Khwan's body was broken into pieces and placed in a copper basin. To prevent any rumour of his survival, his corpse was displayed to the public for a few days before being buried at Wat Khok Phraya. King Süa had evidently learnt from his father's fights against the 'ghost' of King Narai's brother.

Upon hearing of Phra Khwan's death, Queen Yothathep sought refuge with her beguine aunt, Yothathip. Now, a Buddhist concept was used to explain the fall of Narai's daughter. Her aunt reminded Yothathep that her son's death was a consequence of her own past wrongdoings. By living 'in a secret understanding' with Phetracha before his accession, she had been the cause of the deaths of her two uncles.¹⁰⁹ Upon the beguine's request, King Süa spared the Queen's life but stripped her of her queenly rank and possessions. He was not so merciful to her co-conspirators who did not escape a cruel end and their family members were enslaved. With the murder of Phra Khwan, and the degradation of Yothathep, King Süa was able to end any possible challenge from the old dynasty, which his father had tried to do by destroying the old *khunnang* families but had not been able to complete because he had needed Narai's lineage to legitimize his rule.

Another Fraught Relationship: The VOC and King Süa

The accession to the throne of King Süa in early 1703 confirmed the establishment of a new dynasty which was definitively liberated from the old forces connected with the Prasatthong Dynasty which had emerged in 1629. For the Dutch, it meant the end of the possibility ever again to be

recognized as the most important foreign ally of the Siamese King—this is said notwithstanding the actual significance of the VOC to the maritime trade and affairs of Siam. Although the Dutch found King Phetracha increasingly anti-European—up to now they had never entertained this idea about any Siamese King they knew—, it can be said that the real anti-Dutch actions in Siam came with the beginning of King Süa's reign. Having overcome his opponents, the new monarch now focused on the redefinition of Siam's relationship with the Dutch. The signs were not good. Immediately, the Siamese court refused to renew the Dutch-Siamese Treaty according to the 1688 version. Besides disputing the VOC commercial privileges, it also demanded the 'impossible': that the Company comply with the rules and regulations of the kingdom, especially its jurisdiction.¹¹⁰

At the Company's request, in his 1705 analysis of the declining trade in Siam former *Opferhoofd* Tant explained that the difficulties which the Dutch were facing had their roots in King Süa's suspicion of Europeans, because he was still haunted by bad memories of the French. Despite this, he optimistically believed that the King would not completely reject the Dutch, because he relied on their protection for his outward-bound ships—here Tant's vision was correct—and against possible revenge by the French. This may have reflected how deeply the French affair had had an impact on the attitude of the generation which had endured the turmoil of 1688. Alternatively, it seemed to have become an entrenched idea among the post-1688 VOC employees in Siam. Considering it impossible to obtain any personal contact with the new King, he suggested that the Governor-General bypass the 'malicious' Siamese ministers by writing directly to the King about his officials' machinations. In doing so, Tant seemed to have forgotten that this would not work, because the officials were able to manipulate the translation of any foreign letters to the King. Nevertheless, it was typical of the way of thinking current among the VOC employees in Siam that Tant found it so difficult to relinquish his hope of regaining the King's favour.¹¹¹ But he was mistaken.

Having accompanied his father almost as a shadow throughout his political career, King Süa was a different personality in a different situation. He had risen to the throne by his own strength and political acumen and did not even consider requesting Dutch assistance for the consolidation of his power. Contrary to Tant's above-mentioned expectations, the situation in 1705-6 became so hopeless for the Dutch that the Company decided to close down its *comptoir* in Ayutthaya. The High Government decided to send Jan van Velsen there in an attempt to resolve the differences or, failing that, to oversee the withdrawal from Siam. The Siamese officials were anything but friendly to the Commissioner. The Dutch demanded that Van Velsen be given a formal reception and admitted to

an audience with the King, just as was accorded Pieter de Bitter in 1664 when he came to conclude the first Dutch-Siamese Treaty. The request was not granted. The *Phrakhlang* also turned down the Dutch proposal to fire a salute from their compound during the reception of the Commissioner, a request which had been granted so many times in the past. No court representative was sent to attend the Dutch toast to the health of the Siamese King in the VOC lodge. During this celebration, the Company men found themselves threatened by the presence of 1,000 armed men composed of a multi-ethnic force—Malays, Makassarese, Cochin Chinese and others—on boats moored in front of their settlement. The letter from the Governor-General and the two Persian horses sent as gifts to the King were taken into the palace, but the court declined to reciprocate in writing on the grounds that the Governor-General had not replied to a previous letter of the King—an act of breaching the long-standing protocol. Ten days later, the unfortunate horses were returned to the Dutch in a neglected condition. Cleur reminded his superiors that in Siam the refusal to accept gifts was considered one of the greatest affronts which could ever be offered anyone.¹¹² Meanwhile, Okya Phonlathep used two Dominicans and one Paulist priest, who bore the title ‘State Councillors’, to witness his negotiations with Van Velsen.¹¹³ The Company had no option but to withdraw when the Siamese court forbade the Dutch to trade in Ayutthaya and Ligor and refused to allow it to export rice.¹¹⁴ For its employees, the worst was still to come when King Sūa prohibited the departing Dutchmen to take their indigenous as well as mestizo wives and their offspring out of the country.¹¹⁵

On leaving for Batavia, the Dutch ships were subjected to minor bullying by the Siamese on the way to Pak Nam. However, some Siamese grandees did come to send the Dutch off at the warehouse Amsterdam: Okphra Choduek, Okphra Ratchamontri, the Governor of Bangkok Okphra Thonburi, Okluang ‘Rampasidie’, and Okluang Phrapadaeng. They promised to protect the European employees left behind and the Company’s assets. Van Velsen was overjoyed to board the Company vessel at the river mouth and to be free of the ‘mean and horrible people’ of Siam.¹¹⁶ The Siamese court blamed the breach in the relationship—the withdrawal of the VOC from Siam—on Van Velsen’s insensitivity to local customs as well as on the conduct of the former *Opperhoofd* Tant, more particularly specifying their non-compliant behaviour and attitudes.¹¹⁷ The Commissioner told a different tale, maintaining that he was forced by the court to leave lock, stock, and barrel, after the King’s debts had been completely liquidated in the agreed manner. Batavia was yet not pleased with the conduct of its employees, especially Van Velsen.¹¹⁸

Conclusion

The VOC reports reveal how much King Phetracha's court was absorbed by internal struggles: rebellions and court intrigues. To survive all these required both the redefinition of the political relationship among the actors and the self-reinvention of the main political personae. Despite the authority he had gained after his victory in the Palace Revolution of 1688, King Phetracha found himself hemmed in by his officials, his former collaborators. The purge of 1699 seemed to have been the King's logical response to the prevailing power relations, in which he now was at a disadvantage.

The Dutch characterized both Kings Phetracha and Sūa as sceptical of Europeans. Nevertheless, we must be careful not to label the two Kings simply as xenophobic. During their reigns, Europeans clearly lost their prominence at court, but the Siamese court had good reasons for this fall from grace. The conflict with the English and the political struggle against the French in the 1680s, as well as the commercial disputes with the Dutch in the 1660s and 1690s up to their withdrawal in 1706, convinced the Siamese Kings that they did not always have control over the Europeans. Despite this Achilles' heel, the court of Ayutthaya continued employing Europeans, though no longer in administrative positions; in fact King Sūa even sought to renew ties with the English merchants.¹¹⁹ If the initial favourable inclination of Phetracha towards the VOC had degenerated into suspicion, his successor's attitudes towards the Dutch suffered a reverse. When the VOC chose to return to Siam in that same year, its employees were not at first warmly embraced by King Sūa who remained resentful of their withdrawal. Yet, by the end of his reign, the Dutch had eventually regained his favour, as symbolized by the invitation issued to Cleur and his men to join King Sūa and his sons on a sailing trip, during which a small boat—a gift sent by Batavia to the King—was also tested.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, neither the Dutch nor any other Europeans were fully to enjoy the privileges their predecessors had been allowed in the previous century. During the eighteenth century, the VOC servants themselves were to be constantly confronted with the question of whether to stay or, again, to leave Siam.

CHAPTER SEVEN

REMAIN OR LEAVE?: THE DUTCH AND THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SIAMESE COURT

Introduction

A period of relatively stable relations between the VOC and King Thaisa, who succeeded King Süa in 1709, was followed by the much more troubled times of the last reigns of Ayutthaya under Kings Borommakot, Uthumphon (r. 1758), and Ekathat (r. 1758-67). Research into Borommakot's reign has resulted in two contrasting interpretations. In its longer-term consequences, his long reign represents 'a sort of golden age' of Ayutthaya history. Revealing himself as a strong supporter of Buddhism and as a powerful actor in regional politics, his kingship became an inspiration to the founders of the Chakri Dynasty in the 1780s and 1790s.¹ In the shorter term, Borommakot's policy and its (unintended) consequences—most importantly, political factiousness and mismanagement of manpower—were partly responsible for the political and social confusion which would dominate the short reigns of his sons, Uthumphon and Ekathat, and which would contribute to the fall of Ayutthaya.²

To a certain extent, the Dutch representation of King Borommakot agrees with the second interpretation: it shows a King who had to suffer the sharing of power and resources with both the *chao*—his many children—and the *khunnang*. This situation, which threatened Dutch interests in Siam and required their constant attention, continued into the reigns of Uthumphon and Ekathat, who in turn did not have the same command of the situation their father had had.

As we shall see in this chapter, between 1733 and 1767 the Dutch-Siamese relationship was put to the test in several ways. In the past, royal favour had been the last resort which saved the Dutch from many difficulties. However, soon after Borommakot's enthronement, the absence of any intention on his part to intervene in their favour forced the Dutch to realize once again that they were no longer a privileged nation in Siam. In the face of the decline in the VOC-Siam trade, the Ayutthayan court increased its pressure on the Company servants in the kingdom, while the High Government in Batavia grew less conciliatory to the court demands. The Dutch now also had to widen their scope and interact with the more powerful *chao* and *khunnang*. At the same time, various external factors,

such as the importance of Ceylon to the VOC's strategy and the Burmese invasions of Siam posed additional challenges to the Dutch to reconsider their position in the Thai kingdom.

Diplomat or Despot?: Dutch Evaluations of King Borommakot

In the eyes of the Dutch, the basic conditions which had characterized the period immediately preceding King Borommakot's reign—precisely the reigns of his father, King Süa, and his older brother, King Thaisa—did not differ distinctively from the previous century. After the elimination of those associated with King Narai, the tensions among the *chao* of the new dynasty quickly became manifest. The Thai chronicles give an inkling of King Süa's mistrust of his own sons,³ and a Dutch report mentions that a cousin or nephew (the Dutch word is the same) of the King plotted against him in September 1706.⁴ Nevertheless, the transition from King Süa to King Thaisa was a peaceful one—the first untroubled succession since the enthronement of King Ekathotsarot in 1605.

In 1712 and 1713, Thaisa's legitimacy was challenged by a rebel force which attacked Tenasserim and Mergui. The Dutch sources say it was led by a person who claimed to be a son of a brother of King Narai. The *Phrakhläng* explained to Batavia that this man was a Mon monk from Tavoy and that he had Burmese followers and some Moors also assisted his forces in plundering both cities. In the end, the rebellion was defeated and its leader fled.⁵ If the Dutch were right about his claim to be related to King Narai, this information points to a dominant pattern in provincial revolts during the late Ayutthaya Period and the position King Narai had won in the popular imagination. All the leaders of the Thammathian Rebellion of 1689, the Nakhon Ratchasima Revolt of 1699, and again in this Tenasserim uprising were (or were reported to be) either a magic-practising monk or a 'holy man' who allegedly claimed to be related to King Narai—a name to be conjured with. They legitimized themselves and won support among a certain part of the population by linking 'magic' with 'royalty'.

Now and then, Ayutthaya's vassal states broke away before re-submitting within a short time, just as they always had done. In 1712, when the Queen of Patani rebelled against King Thaisa, Thai troops were sent there. Rumour had it that a Siamese governor might replace the Queen. Whether this was considered a threat or a promise, Patani decided to send the tributary flowers to the Ayutthayan court the following year, and with this token of submission the war came to an end.⁶ In 1717, Thaisa engaged in a war against King Angk Em of Cambodia, mainly to help restore its former King Thommo-reachea IV, who had sought refuge at

the Thai court two years earlier. The Dutch gossiped that the former Cambodian King was not enthusiastic about leaving Ayutthaya, where he had been pleasantly entertained by courtesy of King Thaisa. In the end, Thaisa did not re-install Thommo-reachea but succeeded in forcing the pro-Vietnam Angk Em to recognize Ayutthaya's suzerainty.⁷

The Siamese court continued receiving and sending embassies, though without any notable success. In 1715, the Nawab of Masulipatam sent an embassy to Ayutthaya to complain about the bad treatment of his envoys in 1706. However, the newly arrived envoys were prevented from meeting King Thaisa by the Siamese officials. The Dutch thought that this repeated discourteous treatment might drive the Nawab to decide to seize Thai ships around the Coromandel Coast.⁸ They did not mention what could possibly have motivated the *khunnang* to treat the embassies from Masulipatam so cavalierly, especially when Ayutthaya seemed to be interested in trading with Coromandel. In 1718, a Spanish embassy from Manila arrived; it was the last grand European embassy—with 122 members—to visit Ayutthaya. Nevertheless, it did not help improve the trade between Manila and Ayutthaya.⁹ Moreover, while the French traders failed to re-enter Siam, the attempts to re-establish the English-Siamese relations found no success either, despite the enthusiasm of the Ayutthayan court for a revival. Consequently, the Dutch remained the most important European traders in Siam.

The improvement in the relations with the VOC which had begun in the last years of King Süa's reign was confirmed when the new King, Thaisa, immediately agreed to renew the Dutch-Siamese contract on 1 March 1709. In general, he treated the Dutch in a friendly enough way. The VOC men were, for instance, invited to attend the tonsure ceremony of the King's eldest son, which they understood to be considered 'one of the most magnificent and most esteemed feasts'.¹⁰ It was not all plain sailing, disputes over trade tended to accumulate. However, the tension was interrupted by King Thaisa's death and the following conflict of succession in 1733.

In 1732, when King Thaisa's relatively peaceful and stable reign was drawing to an end because of his fatal illness, Ayutthaya politics fell back into its former pattern: a conflict of succession. This time it ended with the victory the following year of Prince Phon, who then assumed the throne as King Borommakot at the age of about fifty-two. He was neither a stranger to the Dutch, nor was his ambition unknown to them. As the *Wangna* Prince, he had already been active in foreign trade, sometimes using the VOC to transport his factors and goods overseas, for instance, to Surat.¹¹ The Dutch also reported that, in 1732, when King Thaisa became very ill, Prince Phon started mobilizing forces, unfortunately underestimating his brother's remaining strength. King Thaisa sentenced

one of the Prince's prominent courtiers to death for having recruited 10,000-12,000 men upcountry for the purpose of seizing the royal palace as soon as the King died. Consequently, Prince Phon and his sons had themselves ordained as monks in September of that year to avoid being prosecuted. This affected the Dutch as well. From a practical point of view, it meant that the VOC had lost a connection to the court. Since the Prince was in the monkhood he gave no audiences, and as he had lost the King's favour, the Dutch could not inquire how King Thaisa reacted to their threat to withdraw from Ayutthaya.¹² Financially, the Company also made a considerable loss on the debt which the Prince owed to it, because he had now theoretically retreated from a profane, business life. Lastly, both the expected death of the King and the movements of the rival factions at court had thrown the kingdom into confusion, which subsequently raised the price of rice and delayed the departure of the VOC ships.¹³

At last, King Thaisa died at ten o'clock in the morning of 13 January 1733. Around six o'clock in the evening, the Dutch heard cannon shots from the direction of the city which marked the beginning of the fighting between Prince Phon and his nephews. This struggle lasted three days till 16 January. Thaisa's eldest son, Chaofa Naren (in his conferred rank, Kromkhun Surentharaphithak), had been a monk since 1716 and was not involved with this succession conflict. Chaofa Aphai, who was, according to the Thai chronicles, his father's choice to succeed, and Chaofa Paramet tried to seize the royal palace immediately after Thaisa's death. Thai sources mention that they were defeated by Phon's leading official, Khun Chamnan Channarong. The Dutch reported that the two princes fled but were arrested and finally executed on 18 February.¹⁴

The new King rewarded Khun Chamnan Channarong with the powerful office of *Phrakhlang* and promoted him to Chao Phraya Chamnan Borirak. With their business uppermost in their minds, the Dutch responded to this new development by sending their interpreter to congratulate the new *Phrakhlang* and ask for an opportunity to discuss business with him. The Minister was, however, occupied with interrogating those who had served the opposition. Since a considerable number of the officials had been supporting Thaisa's sons, Borommakot's enthronement was followed by a large-scale purge and the appointment of many new *khunnang*. According to the Dutch, the King initially spared the life of his brother's Chinese *Phrakhlang*, who had quickly sought protection in the monkhood and presumably still had allies at court. His respite was brief as he was later forced out of the temple, and killed by two Malay Muslims. The Dutch heard that it was Borommakot's eldest son, Chaofa Thammathibet (Kromkhun Senaphithak), who had ordered this assassination, though reportedly not without the King's knowledge.¹⁵ In fact, the

new ruler almost had to pay the price for the murder of this Chinese grandee. In 1734, when the King and his court had left the city for a while, some 400 Chinese tried to seize the royal palace but were defeated. A section of the Chinese people in Ayutthaya resented the fall from prominence of their community and the death of their patron.¹⁶

In general, Borommakot's policy did not break with those of his predecessors, its main line being to strengthen royal control over internal politics and foreign trade. He used demonstrations of public piety and the support of Buddhism to help legitimize his rule. Instantly, he was pragmatic enough to be ready to share a part of his wealth and power with his officials, whose support he needed.¹⁷

King Borommakot not only continued active participation in international trade but also pursued the tendency to reduce Dutch commercial privileges in Siam which had begun under his father.¹⁸ This came as a surprise and disappointment to the Dutch, who had hoped that, given the good relationship they had had with Prince Phon, they would benefit upon his enthronement.¹⁹ The fiercest Dutch critic of the King was *Oppelhoofd* Theodorus van den Heuvel, whose directorship (1735-40) was plagued by many disputes with the court, for which his tactless behaviour was partly responsible. His conduct earned him such pejorative descriptions as 'unpredictable', 'not trustworthy' and 'a man without brains' by the Siamese.²⁰ His depiction of King Borommakot was fairly typical of the image of the Siamese King in Dutch eyes: greedy and arbitrary.²¹ Van den Heuvel warned the Company to handle this ruler, who would easily take anything which displeased him as an offence, carefully.

Because he claimed to rule perfectly and to surpass all his predecessors in that capacity, he had to be honoured and humoured in the way that he normally was flattered by his courtiers, [this] being the only way to please him and win his favour for oneself.²²

The Dutchman did not understand that what he considered 'flattery' was an intrinsic part of the court protocol governing the relationship between the ruler and his servants. In Van den Heuvel's attitude towards Siamese court protocol and King Borommakot, there are echoes of Van Vliet's opinions of King Prasatthong and his court a hundred years earlier.

The Dutch believed that Borommakot's financial position was precarious. It is possible that he had to bear various costs for winning allegiance among the courtiers and for having inherited financial problems from his brother, such as the debts to the VOC.²³ Van den Heuvel also ascribed the difficulty of trading in Siam to the fact that the King had about eighty children, all of whom tried to enrich themselves.²⁴ Not even the prominent officials dared to protest to the King about his children's malpractices. The *khunnang* were trapped by their fear of the King's brutality and the permanent state of uncertainty about their status. The com-

moners on the other hand were miserably muzzled and persecuted by the King's favourites to such an extent that it had become a 'mortal sin' to own more than others did. Van den Heuvel believed that the common people were dissatisfied with the 'stagnation of trade'. Obviously, the commercial slow-down and the absence of rights to private property disturbed the Dutch most. Van den Heuvel also wrote that many people anticipated that the King, who was suffering from goitre, would not live long, and that he was, therefore, indulgent of such wrongdoing by his family members and officials, even claiming part of the booty for himself. Van den Heuvel tried to convince his superiors in Batavia that some officials as well as the commoners were dissatisfied with the behaviour of the royal family members and secretly yearned for revolt and change.²⁵ His analysis, or rather wishful thinking, proved unsound. There was no *coup d'état* led by any *khunnang* and only a small popular revolt in Lopburi.²⁶ The political struggles remained faction fights among the *chao*—the King's sons themselves—as we shall see later in this chapter.

After King Borommakot had successfully consolidated his power, his attention focused on trade, including the unfinished business with the VOC. In the last years of King Thaisa's reign, the Company had already insisted that it would accept only cash, tin, elephants' teeth, and gum resin as payment from the Siamese court for its goods, and no sappanwood, which it had received in far too great quantities. The Siamese court now restricted access to many important goods and forced the Dutch to buy these only from the King's factors. The Company and the Crown quarrelled over the pricing of many goods, especially Indian textiles and silverware imported by the Dutch.²⁷ The tense relations between the Siamese court and the VOC employees in Siam became obvious in 1736 and led to the withdrawal of the Dutch from the Thai kingdom in 1741. The combination of the King's determination and the lack of any powerful friends at court did not facilitate the Dutch position. The Deputy *Phrakhlang*, Okphra Phiphatkosa, whom Van den Heuvel described as the 'most experienced, pious and well-intentioned' among all the Siamese Ministers, was severely flogged for trying to defend the VOC before the King, even 'without respect for the location', namely in a temple. This friend of the Dutch had apparently overestimated his influence on the King. In this case, the *Phrakhlang*, who was described by the Dutch as 'good but inexperienced in state affairs', was prudent enough not to try to help the Dutch. Upon hearing of Phiphatkosa's fate, the *Opperhoofd* lamented that the Siamese court was a place 'where no truth at all exists and where it is now a crime to speak out the truth. Often the aftermath [of speaking the truth] can have bad consequences.'²⁸

Indeed, up to the beginning of 1737, the Siamese court had dealt with the Dutch harshly on several occasions. In April 1736, the Siamese offi-

cials accused the keeper of the warehouse Amsterdam, Geert Cornelisz Lans, of illegal possession of opium. After having protested in vain that the Siamese demand to search the warehouse would violate the 'old custom' of Dutch immunity, the *Opperhoofd* had to consent to the search but demanded that it took place in the presence of Company employees. Although, in the end, one of Lans' servants confessed 'under torture' that she was responsible for bringing in the opium, the officials insisted that Lans, too, had to be punished. To pacify the Siamese, the Dutch decided to give the warehouse keeper a beating on his buttocks. Apparently not completely appeased, the officials threatened to keep the Amsterdam under surveillance.²⁹

In early 1737, the Siamese authorities chased people away from the VOC settlement, prevented boats from calling at its lodge, prohibited the Dutch from buying food, and intercepted the letters from the Amsterdam, thereby interrupting the communication between the lodge and the ships lying at anchor at the river mouth. The court even demanded that the Dutch return the rice which they had lawfully obtained as provisions for the outgoing ship. Lastly, the Siamese laid siege to the VOC lodge with armed boats and cannons installed on the city wall trained on it.³⁰

The harassment continued outside Ayutthaya: King Borommakot ordered that anyone who was caught selling tin to the Dutch in Ligor would risk confiscation of his property and death (his dead body would be exposed in front of the VOC lodge there). Rumour spread among local people that the King would throw the Dutch out of Siam. Despite the rule, when a Chinese was arrested for bringing tin to the Dutch lodge, he was released by 'the usual means by which one can win all the Siamese processes'—bribery. The VOC *Resident* in Ligor, however, did not recommend the Company risk buying tin without permission because the King was obviously targeting the Dutch.³¹

At this point, King Borommakot may have been afraid that he had pushed the Dutch too far—because his purpose was not to drive them away but to press them into submission—and consequently he changed his tactics in dealing with them, by using 'splendour' to awe them. His confidence in dealing with foreigners, which is reminiscent of that of Prasatthong and Narai, can be traced back to the days when he was still the *Uparat*. In 1730, on the advice of a Siamese courtier, the Dutch had tried to improve their connection with the then Prince Phon by asking for his permission to view the bier made for the cremation of a highly respected, learned monk who had taught members of the royal family. By permission of the Prince and, of course, King Thaisa, *Opperhoofd* Van Alderwereld, his assistant Volkaert and their wives, the scribes, and the interpreter attended the cremation. Incidentally, this is the only men-

tion I have found in Dutch sources that the wives of VOC employees ever participated in a court ceremony. The Dutch were offered tea, candied fruits, and betel, in a small pavilion built specially for them. They were also allowed to pay homage to the King and his family from fairly close by.

The Dutch described the bier, made 'according to the custom' and by order of Prince Phon himself, as representing the shape of a gilded pagoda under a soaring arched roof of linen and carrying on its top the body of the deceased monk in a coffin. Van Alderwereld did not seem to be much impressed by this bier, which he found to be merely 'somewhat dignified' but the Siamese regarded it as 'extraordinary'. This 'colossus'—implying its large size—was placed on heavy sleds to be dragged forward for half a mile. Then again, the Dutch were served with food on a complete set of silver service, which was prepared and served in a 'somewhat' European way. The bier, which was 'deliberately' brought very close to the Dutch shelter, was moved by 500–600 men with about 4,000 others who now and then relieved each other. Though not much impressed by the ceremony, the Dutch expressed the customary gratitude to King Thaisa and Prince Phon.³²

In March 1737, Borommakot, now the ruling King himself, invited the VOC men to join the annual journey to Phra Phutthabat, the sacred place situated north of Ayutthaya, which housed the 'Buddha's Footprint'. This invitation was 'part of a diplomatic game over trade policies and profits' when Siamese-Dutch commercial relations stood at the nadir.³³ The Dutch regarded the sudden change in the King's tactics with suspicion, but they saw no use in declining the invitation.³⁴ Borommakot was determined to convince the Dutch that they once more were a favoured nation of the King of Siam and consequently persuade them to accept his commercial terms. It was a unique opportunity never before granted to any other Dutchman. Van den Heuvel kept a *dagregister* of this eighteen-day journey, during which the Siamese court treated the Dutch excellently. This journal has been translated into English and was published in 1997 with discussions about its context; therefore, I shall discuss here just some relevant points.³⁵

Throughout this journey, the King and his courtiers were extremely attentive to the Dutch party. They made sure that the Dutchmen missed neither the magnificence of the court—for example, the royal water procession, the court dances—nor its hospitality. Van den Heuvel indeed did not miss all these and the chance to describe them in detail. The court even provided not only bearers for the 'corpulent' *Opperhoofd* and his entourage, it also allowed them to share the King's drinking water (because the local water contained a high degree of saltpetre). The Dutchmen were told that the court accorded them the same honours it accord-

ed to the Cambodian King who was then in exile in Ayutthaya.³⁶ Nevertheless, they remained cautious.

This morning we received several visits from mandarins and court officials who had apparently been sent on purpose to spy on our behaviour and on whatever we might say about the King and his court. Consequently we behaved very cheerfully and praised and extolled everything to the skies, and showed the greatest satisfaction with the King's treatment.³⁷

Apart from that, the Dutch took great pains to thank the *Phrakhlang* for all the favours and honours they received, although they knew that he actually contributed only little to these privileges which came directly from the King.³⁸

Generally speaking, the Dutch tried to conform to the court protocol, but on one point they did not: they strongly rejected the idea of paying respect to the Buddha's Footprint, which they considered to be against their conscience and religion. While some courtiers were annoyed with the Dutch rejection, King Borommakot accepted it, reasoning, 'who is not faithful to his god, is not faithful to his master'.³⁹ Hence, the Dutch were allowed to view the footprint without making a gesture of reverence. Yet, it should be borne in mind that Borommakot's religious tolerance was only so liberal when it did not concern his own subjects. Dutch and French sources mention that, in 1730, King Thaisa decreed an anti-Catholic restriction, forbidding priests to baptize and convert his subjects and to preach in Thai. At that time, the French believed that Prince Phon was behind this move. Dutch records only suggest an indirect connection. The relatives of a young man under the Prince's command had complained that he was practising Christianity. According to the Dutch, this young man was a son of a deceased official of the Prince and had been brought up in the French seminary and been taught the catechism. King Thaisa forced him to adjure his faith and ordered an investigation into what kind of people became Christian and what their motives to convert were. Unfortunately, there is no record of the outcome.⁴⁰

The journey to Phra Phutthabat also gave the VOC men a rare opportunity to meet and observe the members of Siamese elite society. Most interesting was the interview with a prominent monk whom the Dutch found to be a 'polite, talkative, and very inquisitive man'. First, the monk asked them about European buildings and life-style. Then, an intense discussion broke out about the eclipse of the moon which occurred at that moment. It shows a big divide between the Dutch and Thai worldviews. The Dutch explained this natural phenomenon from a Western scientific outlook. The monk, who represented the Siamese elite, opposed them in almost every point: he argued that the eclipse of the sun and the moon was accidental (not predictable) and the world was square and stood on a firm foundation. Apparently, there was a difference in opinion not only

between the Dutch and the Siamese, but also among the Siamese themselves. When Chaofa 'Watpothaij', reportedly known as a 'foolish prince', insisted that the world stood on a foundation because 'if it were not so, how could the world have carried our god, who was so heavy that even a hundred thousand men could not lift him', the Dutch as well as the monk responded with a grin.⁴¹

King Borommakot's courtesy continued into January 1738, when he had the Dutch invited to the cremation of Kromluang Aphainuchit, one of his queens of the first rank, who had died on 6 August of the previous year. This two-day ceremony took place in the third, innermost forecourt. Van den Heuvel and his men had to fight their way through the throng of people to reach the ceremonial site. The place was richly decorated with sculptures, such as 'tigers, horses with wings, demons with eagle heads, and griffins'. Part of the space was allocated to the 'pavilions and towers' serving as stages for the shadow play and other performances. Interestingly, European and Chinese rarities—unfortunately no details are given—were displayed as well.⁴² Apparently, objects made in Europe were still valued among the Thai elite. The Siamese court later asked the Dutch to have copies of two pieces of round-shaped glassware made in the Netherlands. Van den Heuvel wrote that these objects were meant to be a remembrance of the late Queen and a sacrifice to her 'wandering spirit'. Probably, they were actually meant for keeping her relics.⁴³

The procession bearing the Queen's remains approached in great ceremonial order. Firstly, a hundred men walked along with flowers in their hands and their faces directed towards the corpse. They were followed by eleven pairs of wooden statues of animals carrying small 'towers' on their backs, which were pulled forward pair by pair by a number of men. Of the first pair—two lions with eagle heads—, one statue carried the flame, and another bore wax candles, sandalwood, eaglewood, and other combustible materials needed for the pyre. In the third place came the three ceremonial carriages. The first and smallest carriage in the forefront carried an old monk who was reading aloud from a 'Siamese book'—the Buddhist canon. The middle one carried one of the princes—probably the Queen's only son, Chaofa Thammathibet. Lastly, the biggest carriage in the rear bore the body of the late Queen enclosed in 'sanko' (*kot*), an enormous, round, gilded container with a gold lid which functioned as a coffin. Following this, five of the King's sons were carried on canopied chairs, on the shoulders of the men. Then came drummers and trumpeters, and rows of all prominent officials, every one clad in white, with high white head-cloths, and finally King Borommakot appeared, clad in silver cloth and sitting on an uncanopied golden seat.

As had been the pilgrimage to Phra Phutthabat, the cremation was an occasion for the King to display his superiority, not only spiritually but

also materially. After the procession, the King personally offered yellow robes and items necessary to their daily lives to the monks. Gold and silver Siamese coins pricked in limes—so that they would not get lost in the sand—were strewn among the scrambling folk as a way of giving alms. As it had become their practice in Siam on such occasions, the Dutch generously and publicly presented the King with 140 pieces of various sorts of textiles.

King Borommakot wanted to know what the *Opperhoofd* thought of the funerary appurtenances and whether he had enjoyed the ceremony. Van den Heuvel answered properly that he was impressed by the event but he would have enjoyed it better, if the cause for the ceremony had not been so painful for the King. Borommakot replied, also properly, that he appreciated that the foreigners felt such sympathy for his personal loss.

In the meantime, the Siamese court had actually ceded to the Dutch demands for payment of the King's debt, delivering tin and substituting ivory and gum resin for the sappanwood. However, in the course of 1738, the Siamese began to believe that the Dutch had distorted the price of the textiles previously agreed. At this point, King Borommakot again altered the manner in which he treated the Dutch. The Company interpreters were flogged and put in chains on the King's orders. The court also threatened to cancel the privileged tax rate of the VOC.⁴⁴ After Batavia had decided on a withdrawal from Siam in July 1740, the court turned openly hostile to the VOC. In September, it issued an order to inspect all incoming Dutch ships at the toll house, claiming that it needed to control opium smuggling. The Dutch protested on the grounds that such an inspection not only violated the traditional immunity of their ships in Siam, but was also against the Company rule, which said that the lock on the cargo hatch was to be broken only by the men in charge of the *comptoir* in Ayutthaya. This time, the King acquiesced and cancelled the inspection of the Dutch ships.⁴⁵ It was a temporary lull. By December the court had palisades placed in the river and around the fortresses in Bangkok to block the departure of the Dutch. In the following month, the batteries at the river mouth were re-fortified and Siamese ships started cruising around. A Dutch attempt to obtain help from a priest in the French camp who had mastered the Thai language to negotiate with the court failed when the French were prohibited from conversing with the Dutch. More sinisterly, the *Phrakhleng* ordered the Dutchmen to make a list of their Dutch-Siamese offspring and prohibited them from taking these children out of the country. The court robbed the indigenous women who had children with Europeans of their security as well as that of their families and friends.⁴⁶

In this already precarious situation, Van den Heuvel's successor, Willem de Ghij (1740-1) was faced with two additional problems. First,

drunken Company soldiers assaulted some Siamese people, including monks, injuring one of them fatally. Insisting on their extra-territorial rights, the Dutch refused to hand over their countrymen to the *Phrakhlang* and were forced to pay compensation to the injured Siamese.⁴⁷ It was, however, the second case that the court seemed to take more seriously. Floris van Essen, the warehouse supervisor, tried to smuggle his child born of a local woman, its nurse and her grandson out of Siam aboard a Dutch ship. To deter other Europeans from trying to do the same, the King ordered that the nurse and her grandson, who confessed to Van Essen's plan upon their arrest, be flogged with forty lashes in the Dutch lodge, in the presence of the Europeans, and then be taken back to the *Phrakhlang*. To avoid any further complications, the Dutch had to accept this order. The Siamese court was still not satisfied and demanded that the *Oppperhoofd* punish Van Essen; otherwise, the Siamese would take him to the Amsterdam and behead him there! Worried because of his child, Van Essen, who was actually a competent employee, suffered a burst of temporary insanity and disobeyed the Company's orders. Not only did he leave his post at the warehouse to come to the lodge in Ayutthaya, but he also lied to the Siamese authorities stating that he had bought the nurse (she must have been somebody's slave) and wanted to send her to Ligor. Under pressure from the court, De Ghij and his council decided to flog Van Essen—in the presence of the Siamese officials but without any European witnesses—to suspend his salary, and to send him to Batavia immediately.⁴⁸

In this state of play, the Dutch departed at the end of February 1741, leaving their property in Ayutthaya and at Pak Nam in the care of Christoffel, Nicolaas, and Pieter Wens. These three brothers were in the Company service but not allowed to leave the country because they were half-Siamese.⁴⁹ In that year, the High Government in Batavia showed its resentment of the way the Siamese had treated the Company and its personnel; it decided to open the letters from King Borommakot and the *Phrakhlang* dispensing with the usual ceremonial pomp.⁵⁰

Up till now, the VOC employees had been meticulous in their observation of Siamese court protocol and had not failed to read even the smallest signs of the court's favour. The Dutchmen who joined the trip to Phra Phutthabat still understood that King Borommakot turning his face towards them during the water procession was a way of showing his favour towards them.⁵¹ They also still knew how to show their gratitude to the court, ritualistically. However, they were not able to take advantage of the King's conciliatory gesture.

Although Van den Heuvel had stirred up irritation at court with his non-compliant attitude, he was, according to custom, given the Siamese rank and title of Okluang Aphaiwichit, together with the usual insignia

of a gold betel box and a sword. He explained to Batavia that, having refused these gifts and the title four times, he dared no longer do so for fear of incurring the King's wrath. Unlike many of his predecessors who were proud of the honours they received, Van den Heuvel interpreted this as an example of Borommakot's capricious temper.⁵² The Dutchman may have been looking for offences, but, perhaps, he was also confused by the changing—diplomatic and despotic—faces of King Borommakot.

The Dutch and the Siamese had different views on how to improve their increasingly sour relations. During the journey to Phra Phutthabat, when King Borommakot wanted to give Van den Heuvel personal gifts, the *Opperhoofd* refused them and suggested that the King bestow his favour on the Company rather than on its employees who were only temporary residents of his kingdom.⁵³ The monarch seemed to believe that he could reach his goal by manipulating the Dutchmen in Ayutthaya and did not try to deal directly with the High Government in Batavia, by such means as sending a special diplomatic mission or gifts. That the Company men could not make use of the King's intention to reconcile was decided less by their ability to mediate between different cultures than by the Company policy they were obliged to follow.

The VOC and the Eighteenth-Century Siamese Officials

In the eighteenth century, the Dutch and the *khunnang* continued their oscillating love-hate relationship. The officials were still in the invidious position of remaining dependent on the king's favour and disfavour. Yet, whether the Dutch were aware of it or not, their reports from this period reveal a picture of the officials who were confident in displaying their wealth and status as well as enjoying a certain degree of freedom of action.

As Dutch sources reveal, direct social interaction between them and the *khunnang* increased, or became more noticeable, especially during the reign of King Borommakot. The *dagregister* of 1740 by De Ghij depicts a lively social contact, even during one of the most troubled periods in their relationship. The *Phrakhlang* invited the *Opperhoofd* and his assistant to his mother's cremation. Soon after, Okphra Phiphatkosa bade the Dutch attend his grandmother's cremation. This courtier soon gave another feast when he was promoted to be the Head of the Royal Treasury, as Okya Sombattiban. The Dutch noted that he was a grandson of the 'under-king, Chao Phraya Thammathirat', presumably Chao Phraya Chamnan Borirak, and they knew that both men were the King's favourites.⁵⁴ Even such middle-ranking officials of the *Phrakhlang* Ministry as Okluangs Raksasombat and Choduek, also invited the VOC men to their children's tonsure ceremonies. These occasions were followed by meals which, inter-

estingly, were prepared by Chinese or Portuguese cooks. In the case of prominent officials like the *Phrakhlang* and the new Okya Sombattiban, their feasts included various kinds of indigenous amusements and firework displays—recreations similar to those the Dutch observed during the trip to Phra Phutthabat. For the *khunnang*, these social obligations were more than a way to display their wealth: they gave them the chance to gain some more, for the guests were obliged to contribute some gifts to their hosts—a fact that the Dutch always considered burdensome.⁵⁵

Another indication in Dutch records of the increasing independence of the Siamese officials was connected to the practice of the *recognitiegelden* (or *recognitiepenningen*). Instead of paying some taxes to the court, the VOC was obliged to give the officials of the Treasury Department, the *Khlang*, a sum of twenty catties of silver per year for their services. For the Siamese officials, the occasional gifts and rewards from foreign merchants like the Dutch had always been an important source of personal income. For as long as it had been there, the VOC had been in the habit of offering gifts and money to individual officials. It is not clear who had initiated this system of 'service fee', but, at least from the beginning of the eighteenth century, the *Khlang* had been collectively receiving, or demanding, this fee which may have helped assure a regular income for its workers. In 1720, Wijbrand Blom mentioned that this practice had already become a custom by his time and could not be avoided without damaging the Company.⁵⁶

Despite Blom's admonition, his instruction was not or could not be followed by his successors; this failure engendered more troubles with the Siamese officials. In 1749, the *Khlang* formally required the VOC to pay the *recognitiegelden*, which had been stopped since its withdrawal in 1741. This must have been a serious issue since the Company had formally returned to Siam in 1748. The Siamese warned that, if the Dutch still ignored this demand, all their privileges would be cancelled: they would have to pay taxes and the textiles they imported would be paid for only with tin and sappanwood, and not in cash.⁵⁷ Resident⁵⁸ Nicolaas Bang (1748-60) believed that the *recognitiegelden* were so important that, to persuade the Dutch to pay them again, the *Phrakhlang* was even willing to make some compromises: to ask the Governor-General to re-open the Company office in Ligor, and to promise the Dutch an exclusive right to Ligor tin.⁵⁹ But the payment of the *recognitiegelden* remained an unsolved issue.

In 1757, the Siamese, again, demanded that the Dutch pay the service fee not only for that particular year but for the previous sixteen years as well. Bang insisted that the Company would rather close down its office again than pay it. Faced with this outright refusal, the *Khlang* officials brought the issue to King Borommakot's attention. This time, it was the

Siamese who complained about the Dutch to the King, rather than the other way around. Consequently, the King ruled in favour of his men and ordered that, should the Dutch insist on not paying the *recognitiegelden*, the Royal Treasury was allowed to deduct an equal sum from the King's return gifts to Batavia. In his letter to the Governor-General, the *Phrakhlang*, who now played the role of middleman only, confirmed that, despite his attempts to arbitrate, the Royal Treasury insisted upon deducting twenty-five *bahar* of tin from the royal gifts as compensation.⁶⁰

The quarrel over the *recognitiegelden* continued even after Borommakot's reign. The Dutch demanded that the court return, among other things, the above-mentioned part deducted from the King's previous return gifts. In 1758, the Company protested by sending a ship to Ayutthaya without the usual gifts to the King and the *Phrakhlang*. In his turn, the Minister demanded that the Dutch deliver the gifts, or face a breach in their friendship. The translator of the Dutch, who was helping the Minister check the contents of the letters to Batavia, heard some Moor officials urge the *Phrakhlang* to insist upon the demand for the *recognitiegelden*. Bang believed that the Moor faction at court wanted to undermine the Dutch position in Siam in favour of the English, whom, in the person of a certain 'Mr. Ellias' of Surat, it was helping to gain access to the Siamese market.⁶¹ Despite all the intrigue, Batavia's strategy seems to have worked because, in the end, the *Phrakhlang* reportedly admitted that it was more urgent that the new King, Ekathat, fill his empty treasury with the VOC gifts than pacify his officials with the Dutch money.⁶²

The VOC as a Cultural Broker between Siam and Kandy

Since the eleventh century, Sri Lanka had exported Theravada Buddhism to South-East Asia. However, the considerable decline of the Sri Lankan *sangha* in the following centuries—as a result of the expansion of the Portuguese Roman Catholic and the Dutch Reformed Churches—led to the periodic importation of Burmese, Arakanese, and Thai monks to help revive the institution, in order to facilitate the re-introduction of the original Sri Lankan version of Theravada Buddhism. In the mid- eighteenth century, the revival of the *sangha* again became an issue as part of the policy of the kings of Hindu-Nayakkar origins from South India then on the throne of Buddhist-Sinhalese Kandy, Sri Vijaya Rajasimha (1739-47) and Kirti Sri Rajasimha (1747-87).⁶³ Consequently, from the 1740s, making use of their contacts, the Kandyans tried to recruit the help of the Dutch to procure Theravada Buddhist monks in Siam.

This Dutch involvement must be understood, firstly, in the context of the VOC's policy towards the Kandyan court, and, secondly, in the con-

text of its opportunistic policy in Siam. Since the expulsion of the Portuguese from Ceylon between 1656 and 1658, the VOC had assumed control of the coastal regions around the island. The independent Kingdom of Kandy in the interior of the island was thereby transformed into an enclave surrounded by the Dutch territories, and consequently it had to rely on VOC transportation for its overseas activities, such as sending embassies to foreign lands. Despite this dependence, the Company needed the co-operation of the Kandyan court to do business there, such as the procurement of cinnamon and its transportation through the territory of the kingdom, and it tried to maintain unfaltering good relations with the Kandyan Kings. Since its withdrawal from Siam in 1741, the VOC had been sending one ship a year to Siam under the supervision of a commissioner but was now seeking to improve its relationship with the Siamese court. Therefore, the desire of Kandy to contact Ayutthaya must have offered the Dutch a heaven-sent opportunity to re-establish its trading position there as well.

The transportation of Siamese monks to Kandy in 1751-3 has become a famous case because of its historically significant success, and the event and its implications have been studied in detail by various scholars.⁶⁴ What is more relevant to my investigation of Dutch perceptions of the Siamese court is the earlier but abortive Dutch-Kandyan expedition to recruit monks from Siam in 1747. The initial attempt made by King Sri Vijaya in 1741 had been stopped by the VOC's withdrawal from Siam but that did not change the King's determination. It was not long before the Dutch felt the need to placate him and to prevent him from seeking help from the English. The clue that the Dutch at least understood what they were dealing with was that a VOC employee, Abraham Arnouts, confirmed to the Kandyan court, from the long experience of the Dutch with Siam, that the kind of religion practised in that kingdom was the same one as that in Pegu where Kandy had wanted to recruit monks before.⁶⁵

Finally, in mid-1747, VOC Commissioner Gerrit Fek arrived in Ayutthaya with Sri Vijaya's envoy and informed the Siamese court that the Kandyans had come to fetch the monks and their retinue whom it had been promised. He said that he had brought two ships for the purpose, one for the monks and one for the Siamese envoys. The Ayutthayan court received the embassy well. The Dutch and the Kandyans were allowed to go on a river excursion around the capital to see the sights, during which trip they saw, among other things, the royal palace, the royal ceremonial barges, and the royal elephants taking a bath. They were also invited to attend an evening feast given by the *Phrakhleng*. While their entourage was passing by the palace, they were asked to make an obeisance to King Borommakot, who was present not far from there, but

hidden from their sight, to observe them 'out of curiosity or rather pleasure'. The Dutch thought that the King was not merely curious to see the visiting embassy but also keen to know how they reacted to the splendour which he could provide.⁶⁶

Despite the good reception of the embassy, the Siamese court did not make things easy for the Dutch. Fek was troubled by the fact that the *Phrakhlang* wanted to receive not only the letter addressed to him by the First Minister of Kandy, but also that from the Ceylonese patriarch to his Siamese counterpart. He believed that the latter should be given directly to the 'high priest' of Siam and that what the Siamese told him about the illness of their patriarch (which made him unavailable to receive the letter and gifts from Kandy personally) was simply an excuse by the officials who wanted to claim more gifts for themselves. Meanwhile, the VOC itself had also strayed from the diplomatic etiquette. Prior to shipping the Kandyan envoys to Ayutthaya, Batavia had opened and translated a letter from the King of Siam to his counterpart in Kandy to look for any information that might give it an advantage.⁶⁷

Fek referred the Siamese officials to their letter to Kandy—supposedly the one Batavia had inappropriately opened⁶⁸—which mentioned that the Ayutthayan court would provide Buddhist monks, if the Kandyans themselves would come to Siam to obtain them. The Siamese now replied that they had meant that ambassadors with credentials should come on a ship of the Kandyan King himself, and not one of the Company, to pick up their monks. They also accused the Dutch of having no respect for Buddhist monks. In their argument, they not only recalled the incident in 1741 when VOC soldiers molested some monks in Ayutthaya. The Dutch had also been seen to walk over the monks' heads—the most sacred part of the body according to Thai belief—and had killed animals in the monks' presence. The culturally insensitive Fek could not understand the reasoning of the Siamese and regarded these as trivial accusations. He told them that the Kandyan King had no ships and sailors of his own and was dependent on the Dutch for overseas transportation. At this point, he began to despair that the Siamese would provide any monks.⁶⁹ He also believed that if the Dutch could not obtain the Siamese monks now, the court of Kandy would be hard to satisfy and the *Phrakhlang* might also refuse to grant them the right to trade in Siam for that year.⁷⁰

In the end, King Borommakot did indeed refuse to send Siamese monks to Kandy. According to the High Government, the Siamese court was concerned with the death of King Sri Vijaya in that year and required that the new King of Kandy 'send a vessel directly from Ceylon, without any Europeans, but with a distinguished embassy and proper [letters of] credential' and 'sufficient gifts'.⁷¹ Kitsiri Malalgoda has asserted that Sri

Vijaya's death may have made Borommakot uncertain about the religious policy of his successor. However, K. W. Goonewardena has suggested that the rejection was caused by the Ayutthayan court's suspicions of Dutch intentions.⁷²

Goonewardena argues that the Siamese did have good grounds for suspecting the 'good faith' of the Dutch about the Kandyan mission. There were a number of reasons to substantiate this. By bringing along many goods and two ships (instead of the usual one a year), the Dutch made their commercial purpose rather blatant. There is a possibility that the *Phrakhlang* had learnt from a Kandyan envoy that the Kandyans probably knew nothing of the letter sent by the Siamese King to the Kandyan ruler via Batavia. He may also have heard from this envoy—who was only the third-ranking person in his mission—that the Dutch had asked the first and second ambassadors of Kandy to remain in Batavia, with the letter and presents from Kandy to Siam. Goonewardena has argued that the appearance of the first and second envoys, as well as the letters and gifts from Kandy, would have left no room for the Dutch to derive some benefit from this mission, and that, without the envoys and letters of credentials, Fek would not be able to manipulate the embassy and find such opportunities to further the Dutch interests when he led the Kandyan envoy to meet the *Phrakhlang*.⁷³ My opinion is that assuming that, from their long relationship, the Siamese court had a good knowledge of the Company's way of thinking, it would be unlikely that the court would have been disappointed that the Dutch did not do this as a matter of 'good faith', but for commercial interests. Consequently, it seems to me more likely that the mission failed because the Siamese court resented the Dutch violation of the diplomatic etiquette between Ayutthaya and Kandy. In short, it was a Dutch diplomatic debacle in Siam, created by the meddling of the Batavian Government and also by its local representative in Ayutthaya.

As had Van den Heuvel before him, Fek lost his patience in dealing with the differences between European and Thai practices. He expressed his frustration in his remarks about the Siamese 'intrigues' with which he had had to struggle during the three years that he had supervised the shipping between Batavia and Ayutthaya. Fek accused the *Phrakhlang* of giving him and the Kandyans false hopes in the beginning just to obtain presents. To speed up the process, the Dutchman gave the court members presents valued at about 800 *rijksdaalders*, mostly out of his own pocket. The silver jug for King Borommakot, which alone cost Fek more than 300 *rijksdaalders*, was, however, refused by the 'greedy' ruler on the grounds that the King of Siam used only a 'golden' jug to wash his feet. Fek also criticized the Siamese for not tolerating any argument, even a civilized one. The Commissioner declared that he would rather quit

serving the VOC than be sent to Siam again the following year. He even recommended the Company use force to demonstrate its power, referring to the naval blockade in the early 1660s. His frustration was so overwhelming that he even offered his salary and his life for the proposed plan. Undoubtedly, Batavia considered this proposal unfeasible and eventually dismissed Fek.⁷⁴

In seeking support from the Buddhist elite, the new Kandyan King, Kirti Sri Rajasimha, resumed the plan to obtain Siamese monks and turned to the Dutch again. Consequently, another Kandyan delegation was dispatched to Ayutthaya, where it was solemnly received in July 1751.⁷⁵ This time, the Dutch naval officers were praised by the Kandyans and the Siamese for their courtesy towards the envoys during the journey. Finally, Borommakot granted Kirti Sri's wish and agreed to send a party of twenty-five monks, plus five Siamese envoys and their attendants, to Ceylon. Yet, the success of the mission was less than joyful for the VOC office in Ayutthaya, which complained about the high cost of receiving the Kandyan embassy as it had had to provide everything from lodging, part of the daily food (in addition to the court's contribution), to transportation, and even substitute gifts. The Kandyan envoys made a mistake by including the robes for the high-ranking monks of Siam among the presents for the King and the *Phrakhlang*, and, understandably, dared not claim these robes back. Therefore, they asked the VOC to provide them with about 150 pieces of cloth for the monks, which Bang had to buy from local traders.⁷⁶ Despite his relatively good insight into the politics of the Siamese court—as we shall see later—, Bang did not pay attention to the ritual aspect of the reception of the Kandyan embassy. His concern was primarily financial.

After a long and arduous journey, the arrival of the Siamese monks and envoys in mid-1753 caused great jubilation in Kandy.⁷⁷ The Governor of Dutch Ceylon, Joan Gideon Loten (1752-7), remarked that the Dutch contribution to the revival of the Kandyan *sangha* facilitated the relationship between the Dutch and the court of Kandy.⁷⁸ However, this optimism was soon replaced by renewed tension between the Dutch and King Kirti Sri, which finally developed into a direct confrontation, the Dutch-Kandyan War of 1766. Although the Dutch-Siamese relationship had already improved—the court had agreed to conclude a treaty with the VOC in 1754—by the time that the Siamese monks were brought back safely to Ayutthaya in 1756, the Dutch were not rewarded for their service by being accorded any special treatment by the Siamese court. Bang still failed to obtain as much Siamese rice as the Company would have liked to have.

The fact that this religious-diplomatic contact is well-documented in both Sri Lankan and Thai sources reflects how Kandy and Siam perceived

its outcome positively. Simultaneously, it shows how the Dutch could be trapped in the web of Asian diplomacy and politics.⁷⁹ Moreover, the whole affair did not end in 1756, for Siamese monks continued to be sent back and forth between Siam and Kandy, also at the cost of the Company.

Eighteenth-Century Court Politics

Although conflicts of succession were a common feature of Ayutthayan politics, it can be said that the underlying conditions of King Borommakot's reign made the factiousness and rivalry between different factions at court even more inevitable. The most pertinent factor was that the King had some eighty children, many of whom—male and female—were competing for wealth and power, a phenomenon which even a foreigner like Van den Heuvel could not have failed to observe. King Borommakot had made an important change in the administrative structure by replacing the system of creating a few large *krom* (independent households) of the *chao* with many minor ones. He had apparently learnt from his victory in 1733 of the political potential of a large princely household such as his own. The smaller *krom* of the *chao* would serve to counterbalance each other and to balance the power of those *krom* (administrative divisions) of the *khunnang* but, individually, would not be powerful enough to pose a threat to the throne. Nevertheless, they were instrumental in the contest for power among Borommakot's sons.⁸⁰

In the eighteenth century, while the Dutch saw the *khunnang* gain more freedom of action, such as in collecting the *recognitiegelden*, they also noted the increasing economic independence of the *chao* from the King's monopoly. The *krom*, with their own administrative capacity, may have enabled the princes and princesses to make a profit from the trade of the kingdom. The Dutch undoubtedly found this situation disturbing. In 1755, the VOC bookkeeper reported from Ligor that there was almost nothing left for the Company trade, not only because of the tin smuggling by the English, but also because of the expansion of trade activities into that province by the members of the royal family. Consequently, Bang protested to the Siamese court about this violation of the exclusive right of the VOC to Ligor tin laid down in the 1754 Treaty. The *Phrakhlung* promised to prevent it from happening again. However, Bang doubted—rightly so—whether the Minister would be able to keep his word. Long before the renewal of the contract, some princes, princesses and other grandees had been sending large amounts of cash to buy tin in Ligor, which gave them priority over other buyers.⁸¹ In the eighteenth century, the economy of Siam became increasingly monetized. As a result of the growth of internal and foreign trade, production needed to be

encouraged: a considerable amount of the goods which used to be delivered as taxes or in lieu of *corvéé* labour now had to be obtained with money. This explains the significance of the *recognitiegelden* to the *Khlang* officials, too. The *chao* and *khunnang* increased their participation in the commerce of the kingdom, which had grown beyond the Crown's control and consequently became more 'liberal' and 'private'.⁸²

The Dutch in Siam had been following the power struggles within Borommakot's family since, as we have seen, the enthronement of the King himself. In 1756, they witnessed the discovery of the hidden challenge to Borommakot's rule posed by Chaofa Thammathibet, who was the King's eldest son and the only son born of Queen Aphainuchit (whose cremation the Dutch had attended in 1738). Chaofa Thammathibet had been appointed the *Uparat* in 1741. Best known to posterity as a great poet, he was also a ruthless politician. The Dutch attributed the authorship of the cunning murder of the Chinese *Phrakhleng* of King Thaisa in 1733 to him. The Thai chronicles mention that, when King Borommakot was seriously ill in 1735, Thammathibet tried to kill his cousin, Chaofa Naren. In the event of the possible demise of King Borommakot, the Prince may have been jealous of his cousin, who enjoyed both the King's favour and was popular among the people, and was anxious about the strength of the latter's right—as the first son of the late King Thaisa—to claim the throne. Chaofa Naren managed to flee to tell Borommakot about the attempt on his life. To escape the King's wrath, Thammathibet sought protection from his mother, who had him ordained as a monk and, before her death, begged Borommakot to spare her son's life. With the King's consent, Thammathibet eventually left the monkhood and resumed his politically prestigious position.⁸³

King Borommakot's sons were divided into two main factions: Thammathibet, Thepphinit, and Thepphiphit (who will play a more important role later in this chapter) ranged themselves against Chitsunthon, Sunthonthep, and Sepphakdi. The promotion of the latter three from the conferred rank of *krommun* to the higher *kromkhun* must have worried the *Uparat* because it automatically increased the number of courtiers and *phrai* in their households. Thammathibet eventually had the officials of his three rivals arrested, questioned, and flogged. In addition, he maintained an acidic relationship with the most powerful official, Chao Phraya Chamnan Borirak, until the latter's death in 1753.⁸⁴ The royal chronicles suggest that Thammathibet's fatal fall was caused by the accusation brought by his three rival half-brothers that he had an affair with one (or two) of the queens of the first rank.⁸⁵ Bang's short but insightful record of 8 January 1757, however, brings to light this deadly enmity even more clearly and gives details of the struggles of the man whom the Dutch called the 'Crown Prince'.⁸⁶

Bang began with the fact that Prince Thammathibet had been suffering from *Morbus Gallicum* (syphilis) and therefore had not presented himself to the king for a while. At the same time, he was ruling the people within his own *krom*—both servants and prominent officials—with a ‘severity even greater than that of his father’. Then, he came into conflict with a half-brother, called ‘Chao Sakeuw’ (the Prince of *Sa Kaew*) in the Dutch report—who was Prince Sunthonthep⁸⁷—, first because of a ‘dispute over an elephant’ (no further explanation is given for this), and then because the latter had displayed an unbecoming degree of pomp. In April 1756, Thammathibet, ‘who thought that he was allowed to do anything’, laid siege to the court of his half-brother and forbade anyone to enter or even pass by. Yet, ‘Chao Sakeuw’ and his sons managed to flee to the royal palace and make a complaint to the King. Borommakot was taken completely by surprise because he had had no idea about the dispute between the two princes. He immediately summoned the high-ranking officials to discover whether this dispute was known to them. The *khunnang* admitted their knowledge but insisted that they were too afraid of the ‘Crown Prince’ to report it to the King. Upon the news of the whereabouts of ‘Chao Sakeuw’, Thammathibet immediately rushed from his court to the royal palace to confront his opponent. But he was denied entrance by order of the King and returned to his court.⁸⁸

Unwillingly, upon his father’s summons, Thammathibet later returned to the royal palace, carrying with him a sword and escorted by his armed guards. Before entering the palace, he was forced to leave his men outside. Within the palace gate, he was ordered to lay down his sword as well. The defenceless Prince was brought before the King who asked why he came to the palace with a weapon, and what ‘Chao Sakeuw’ had done to offend him so much as to deserve such a harsh treatment. More importantly, King Borommakot asked how the Prince dared to assume so much authority while the King was still alive. He was outraged by Thammathibet’s silence and so ordered his son to be imprisoned.

The ‘Crown Prince’ was placed in an isolated cell, with his hands and feet locked in irons. No one was allowed to talk to him except with the King’s permission. While he ate, a prince and two officials had to be present. But Thammathibet ate hardly anything for three days. Meanwhile, various accusations were brought against him. Borommakot appointed ‘Chao Sakeuw’ and ‘Chao Krommekiesa Poon’ (perhaps Krommun Chitsunthon), in conjunction with Okya Chakri and the *Phrakhlang*, to interrogate the prisoner. It seems that the choice of interrogators could only be disadvantageous to the Prince. Since Thammathibet remained silent, the King ordered he be given a flogging of twenty lashes, and then another twenty, and his soles be burnt. Thammathibet’s most important officials were also arrested and ‘confessed under torture’ many things

which implicated their master. First, they said that he had made copies of the keys to the chambers of the King, the Queen and the princesses (this probably means the royal consorts), with which he could enter these rooms during the night and at other inopportune times. Secondly, they said that he had ordered his trusted followers to buy guns and swords, which they kept with them waiting for his order to take action. Thirdly, they said that the Prince was responsible for the killing of many innocent people, including some monks, as well as the breaking of some people's hands, fingers, and teeth. Upon learning about his son's cruelty, the King ordered that he be given fifty more lashes.⁸⁹

During further interrogation, Thammathibet disclosed that he used the copied keys to visit 'four' of the King's principal consorts. These ladies succumbed under the pain of torture—flogged fifty times in the King's presence—and admitted that Thammathibet had visited them illicitly. They also revealed that the Prince had planned to steal into the inner court with his armed men to assassinate the King, his family, and principal officials. Immensely upset by this knowledge, the King ordered his men to give the 'Crown Prince' fifty more lashes and to brand his forehead, arms, and legs. Eventually, the Prince, the four royal consorts, and some of his prominent officials died as a result of the torture. His death itself pacified the King enough to enable him to commence the annual journey to Wat Phra Non, which was situated a two-day journey from Ayutthaya.⁹⁰

Bang did not pass any moral judgement on the event and related the story in a matter-of-fact way. Despite some different information, the outline of his tale, especially about the deadly enmity among the Thai princes, and the bizarre details of the punishments are in tune with the story as told in the royal chronicles of Ayutthaya. This means that, as Cleur had before him, he must have had an informant who had inside knowledge of court affairs. It also reflects the strength of King Borommakot who, though conceding part of his wealth and control to his children and servants, was powerful enough to take on the challenge and even benefited from the factiousness among his men.

In early 1758, when the long reign of King Borommakot was coming to an end, the Dutch reported that the continual tensions between different court factions had evolved into an open struggle. On 20 April, news of the old King's serious illness spread around. Bang reported that the presence of many princes in and around the capital was regarded with widespread dismay among the population. Only six months earlier, the King had finally decided to appoint Chaofa Uthumphon (Kromkhun Phonphinit)—his youngest son born of a queen of the first rank—*Uparat* in place of the deceased Thammathibet.⁹¹ According to the Thai chronicles, Prince Thepphiphit and some prominent *khunnang* recommended

the King choose Uthumphon. The Prince himself claimed that the office should be rightfully given to his elder full brother Chaofa Ekathat (Kromkhun Anurakmontri). Borommakot considered Ekathat, who eventually became king, to be 'dull and stupid. Intelligence and perseverance cannot be found in Him', and therefore he would bring 'misfortune, disaster and ruin' on the kingdom if he were to rule Siam.⁹² According to the Dutch, many princes opposed the appointment of Uthumphon but dared not speak against it openly. The three 'illegitimate sons' of the King—meaning not born of a queen—, Princes Chitsunthon, Sunthonthep, and Sepphakdi, had covertly gained support from many officials and secured their ground in the north of Ayutthaya, intending 'to create their own rule there', after their father's demise. On 24 April, as the King's death drew near, all princes and prominent officials were confined behind the closed gates of the royal palace, as was customary. Even their food was delivered to the palace from their own courts.⁹³

Finally, King Borommakot died on 29 April and the court was thrown into turmoil. On 1 May, the Dutch heard that the three *Krommun* were imprisoned and that the 'Crown Prince' had become King Uthumphon. To honour his accession to the throne, the new King granted an amnesty to 2,000 male and female prisoners. The Dutch were not delighted with this and had the guard outside their lodge strengthened.⁹⁴

The precarious situation after King Uthumphon's enthronement soon took a new turn when Chaofa Ekathat came forward to claim the throne. Bang reports that the Prince had spent a few years in the monkhood, actually quarantined because of his infectious 'Lazarus' disease (leprosy).⁹⁵ After his father's death, Ekathat moved into the royal palace. Obviously enough, his action implied the staking of his claim to the throne. Bang wrote that the Leper Prince began to take over many matters, but principally the handling of the three arrested Princes. After severe torture, they, whom the Dutch described as being Borommakot's favourites and more qualified than Ekathat, were executed. Their supporters who were lucky enough to escape death had to buy themselves out of prison at great expense. Consequently, King Uthumphon abdicated, on 1 June according to a French source, and went to reside as a monk in Wat Pradu, on condition that once he left the monkhood, the throne should be returned to him.⁹⁶ He allegedly devoted himself to the practice of levitation which some 'foolish' monks had recommended to him.⁹⁷ On 14 December, Kromphra Thephamat, the mother of Ekathat and Uthumphon, died. Her death once more inflicted grief on the people, who were afraid that the good relationship between the present King and his brother would soon come to an end without the Queen who, until then, had managed to preserve the good harmony between her sons.⁹⁸ However, events did not turn out as feared.

The question was why had Uthumphon given in to Ekathat? Dutch records give the impression that Uthumphon enjoyed his father's favour, popularity among commoners, and the approval of Borommakot's officials.⁹⁹ The Thai chronicles also mention his support from the *sangha*: Uthumphon obtained help from five respected monks in his efforts to persuade his three adversaries to submit themselves to him, which allowed him, in collaboration with Chaofa Ekathat, to take them by surprise.¹⁰⁰ Bang does not explain how King Uthumphon ensured his victory over his half-brothers, who also had supporters among the *khunnang*. According to the Dutch, King Uthumphon seemed not only to be deterred by the principle of seniority—substantiated by the Thai chronicles—but also disheartened by the severity of his elder brother, in particular in dealing with the three half-brothers.¹⁰¹ These views focus on Uthumphon's personal character. Another factor which the Dutch failed to take into account was that the support of the officials, a very important power base, was unreliable. The Dutch themselves noted that, at the beginning, the three princes and Uthumphon had been supported by some *khunnang*. Yet, the former were defeated, and the latter retreated, probably because they could not rely on their supporters.¹⁰²

The enthronement of King Ekathat was followed by the elimination of many officials who had served King Borommakot for a long time. The Dutch soon observed that the four or five pages, who had served Ekathat when he was still confined in the monastery, were 'elevated from the lowest background to the highest ranks' and eventually took charge of the kingdom.¹⁰³ Thai sources identify two of them as Nai Pin and Nai Chim, the older brothers of Ekathat's consorts, Chao Chom Pheng and Chao Chom Maen. These men were appointed to command the corps of royal pages (*mahatlek*) which controlled a large number of men. They dared to refuse to give the senior officials of the State the respect due to them and also interfered in the administration of the kingdom.¹⁰⁴ These brothers and sisters are excellent examples of how social mobility at the Ayutthayan court worked. While women's status could be elevated via marriage or concubinage with court members, joining the *mahatlek* corps was a way for men to be trained in the administration of the kingdom, especially the royal court, and to rise in its hierarchy.¹⁰⁵ In this case, the brothers and sisters as a group could manipulate both the public and the private life of King Ekathat.

Dutch opinion of King Ekathat was very negative. Bang wrote that the King himself knew nothing other than what his confidants told him, and that he did not display himself to anyone as he was ashamed of his physical condition.¹⁰⁶ The latter may not have disturbed the population very much because the Siamese King usually showed himself only sparingly to the public. After all, good health may not have been the 'most' important

sign of political potency of the eighteenth-century Kings of Ayutthaya. The Dutch had reported Borommakot had suffered from goitre since the 1730s. Nicolaas Beerendrecht, who took charge of the affairs of the VOC office after Bang's death in 1760, added that King Ekathat loved entertainment and ignored all the important aspects of 'state affairs, trade as well as justice'.¹⁰⁷ The VOC ambassador to the Siamese court in 1762, Marten Huysvoorn, summed up, again negatively, what characterized the relationship between the King and his confidants: '[The] King, with his easy attitude, looked through their [his confidants'] eyes and was always contented when he could have a variety of entertainment.'¹⁰⁸

A short interruption in King Ekathat's rule occurred with the Burmese invasion in 1760. Not only the local people but also foreign traders such as the Dutch suffered severe damage from this attack. It was therefore understandable that the VOC men bitterly blamed the King and his ministers for failing to provide effective protection during this crisis. Indeed, the peril was so great that King Ekathat decided to let his younger brother take upon himself the responsibility to defend the kingdom. According to Dutch sources, when Uthumphon returned to government, he released the former officials and his supporters and had his brother's favourites punished or imprisoned. Moreover, the Dutch believed that the comeback of the 'beloved' King gave hope to the 'suppressed' people. Uthumphon was spared from having to accomplish the most difficult part of his task when the Burmese King and general, Alaungpaya, was fatally injured or fell ill and consequently withdrew his troops from Ayutthaya.¹⁰⁹ However, once Ekathat had been freed of fear by the withdrawal of the Burmese, he reclaimed royal power. For a second time, the younger brother retreated to the monastic life and left the throne to his elder brother. The circle was complete when King Ekathat reshuffled the government by releasing his favourites and suppressing those in Uthumphon's service.¹¹⁰

All these conditions had an effect not only on the politics of the court, but also affected the life of commoners and the business of the Dutch. The Dutch bitterly complained that Ekathat's officials respected no law and cared only about their own profit. To make the situation worse, the King's sisters, who had been benefiting by adroitly shifting their support back and forth between Ekathat and Uthumphon, also joined in the orgy of exploitation. The Dutch accused the princesses of being worse than the King's ministers in their attempts to increase their influence on the King and even exceed his power in some cases. Both the ministers and the princesses played the role of 'extortionists' in the trade of the kingdom. A similar view was expressed by the priests of the *Missions Étrangères*. Unsurprisingly, the local and foreign residents of Ayutthaya were so confused by the factiousness at court that they did not know what to do.

They knew only that they had to pay a great deal to settle important matters with the administration.¹¹¹

In 1760, the VOC in Siam suffered not only at the hands of the Burmese forces which burnt down houses and killed or abducted people around its settlement. Its lodge was also plundered by the Thai who took advantage of the chaos. During the escape from their lodge into the city proper, the Dutch suite was ambushed by the enemies. As a result, some European employees were killed. Besides goods and money, three Europeans, Bang's daughter and grandchildren, and thirteen slaves were taken by the Burmese. Bang and his wife later died of the injuries they suffered during the escape.¹¹²

In the aftermath of the Burmese invasion, Abraham Werndlij (1761-5) was sent to supervise the Ayutthaya office in September 1761. He was unquestionably challenged by the corruption among the Company employees, but he also faced three major tasks in dealing with the Siamese court—all were the consequences of the invasion. First of all, he had to submit the Company's requests for reductions in the prices of sappanwood, tin, and elephant tusks, and for a better valuation of the ducats the VOC imported to the court. In this way, the Company hoped to compensate the loss sustained during the attack. His next undertaking was that he had to demand the court restore the VOC's tin which partly had fallen into the possession of a courtier named Luang Krai and partly had been stolen by Thai looters. Lastly, the Dutch needed the court's help to restore the Company's ducats, some of which had been stolen presumably by some local coolies and some of which had been entrusted to a Siamese woman called Nang Paan. The *Phrakhläng* reassured the Dutch that the Siamese authorities would take both Luang Krai and Nang Paan to court and force them to return the tin and the money. He recommended the Dutch send someone to be present during the process in order to translate and represent the Company should there be any dispute; the task was assigned to Michiel Bang, the son of the late *Resident*. However, the Minister also made clear that there would be no chance to recover the stolen money and tin as long as the Dutch could not identify those coolies and looters. Unfortunately, the court could also not deliver the sappanwood owed to the VOC because many woodcutters had been killed during the Burmese attack.¹¹³

The legal proceedings against Luang Krai delivered almost nothing. The courtier was mentioned by the Dutch as the *Phrakhläng* of the 'former Crown Prince'—it is not clear which one, Thammathibet or Uthumphon. He only seldom put in an appearance at the Court of Justice, excusing himself by saying he was constantly required for royal service. Luang Krai insisted that he had returned all of the tin to the Dutch. However, Werndlij doubted his innocence, because not only had

Assistant Beerendrecht sworn that Luang Krai had returned only part of the tin, but the courtier himself also did not want to swear an oath to it. The new *Resident* seemed to have learnt fast about how to find out the truth the Thai way. Meanwhile, Nang Paan gave herself into the protection of a 'princess'. It seemed impossible even for the *Phrakhlang* to take her from there to the Court of Justice.¹¹⁴ So powerful was her protector—unnamed but surely one of the influential sisters of the King—that Nang Paan was not required to appear before the judges.

There is evidence that some VOC employees had taken advantage of the chaos amid the Burmese invasion. In its immediate aftermath, Beerendrecht was reported to be living an extravagant life-style, wearing new clothes, possessing good furniture, and throwing parties. He was charged with being responsible for the missing gum resin and sappanwood during and after the chaos of the attack. Werndlij also interrogated one of the assistant's accomplices, the sailor Johannes de Ruiter who was living beyond his means as well. De Ruiter had changed ducats, which he allegedly had obtained from Beerendrecht, in the city, when changing money with any agency other than the court was forbidden. Werndlij also had reason to suspect that Michiel Bang was involved in corruption. When the *Resident* first arrived in Ayutthaya, the younger Bang—who was half-Mon—had already bought himself out of 'Siamese bondage' and had had a nice house built.¹¹⁵

In defence of his decision to 'arrest' Beerendrecht, Werndlij explained to Batavia that, in Siam, it was easy for anyone to flee, or to place himself or herself under the protection of a monk or a prominent court member. Nang Paan was the obvious indigenous case. But this option was also available to foreigners. Jan Davidsz., the former warehouse keeper, had refused to continue serving the Company and sought protection from a Siamese minister. He had lived in Siam since his childhood and was regarded by the locals as one of them.¹¹⁶

In 1761, the situation worsened not only for the Dutch but for all foreign trading communities in Siam. The 'good' *Phrakhlang* decided to resign his post and became a monk, 'like the former King Uthumphon', to avoid the troubles and damage that some princes and princesses wanted to afflict on him. He was the only *khunnang* whom the Dutch seemed to respect. In their eyes, this nobleman had been the only official who had tried to resist the 'extortionists'. He was 'generous' and (thus) different from other 'greedy' Siamese.¹¹⁷ As a result of his departure, all business came to a halt, although the Dutch tried to contact the Deputy-*Phrakhlang* many times. Contrary to the VOC request for the reduction of commodity prices, the Royal Treasury decided to increase them, and not to barter the goods, both decisions as a means to compensate the loss caused by the Burmese attack.¹¹⁸ In short, the Burmese

invasion forced both the court and the Company to change their trading strategies.

The VOC, Kandy, and Siam: The Prince Thepphiphit Episode, 1760-1762

Krommun Thepphiphit deserves to be placed among the most exciting individuals in eighteenth-century Thai history, for playing an important role in both internal and international politics. He is not only a rare example of a survivor in Ayutthaya politics; more importantly, in the context of this study, the Prince was a pawn in Dutch political experimentation in Asia.

Prince Thepphiphit had survived the political struggles in Siam, including the elimination of Chaofa Thammathibet in 1756, the succession conflict and the following retreat of King Uthumphon in 1758—with both of whom he took sides. According to the Thai chronicles, after King Ekathat had ascended the throne, Thepphiphit decided to seek refuge in the monkhood. Apparently he had not abandoned the temporal world completely as he soon became involved in a plot hatched by some prominent *khunnang* to replace King Ekathat with Prince Uthumphon again. But Uthumphon himself disclosed their plot to the King. He was either genuinely loyal to his brother, or, again, did not believe in the sincere support of the plotters. Notably, at his plea, the lives of the conspirators were spared.¹¹⁹

Prince Thepphiphit appears for the first time in the VOC records when he was reported to have escaped from prison in 1759, supposedly after the above-mentioned coup attempt. The Dutch were informed that ‘Chao Krom Theppipit’ was ‘[King Ekathat’s] illegitimate brother’, and a ‘shrewd and valiant prince, who had been a teacher of the young Uthumphon’. After his escape, his courtiers and their families were arrested and tortured to confess his whereabouts. Some other officials including the supporters of the former King Uthumphon, such as the ‘good’ *Phrakhlang*, were also interrogated or imprisoned, accused of having concealed the fact that the Prince would attempt to escape. The whole confusion, especially the temporary absence of the *Phrakhlang* from his work, hindered the Dutch attempts to dispatch their return ships to Batavia. The VOC records agree with Thai sources that Thepphiphit became a monk ‘to avoid the fate of his three brothers’—his former rivals who were executed upon Uthumphon’s enthronement. They mention, too, that the Prince attempted to escape to Cambodia with a small entourage, but was caught on the border. His life was spared thanks to his monk status.¹²⁰ It actually took more than a monk’s status to save his life; it was certainly Uthumphon’s protection which helped him to survive. In 1759, King

Ekathat decided to include Prince Thepphiphit in the group of monks which the Siamese court was sending to Ceylon, as it had become a frequent practice since 1751. It was obvious to Bang that this was the way to remove the rebel Prince from the politics of the kingdom—when killing him was not an option.¹²¹

Meanwhile, in the Kingdom of Kandy, King Kirti Sri continued his struggles against his grandees. The religious and diplomatic exchange with Ayutthaya and the revival of the Ceylonese *sangha* may have enhanced his dignity in relation to the outside world, but it still failed to impress his own officials. The King's efforts to support the Buddhist clergy and to use this move as a counterbalance to the faction of the nobility which was hostile towards him did not work to his advantage, because the liaison between the religious elite and these noblemen strengthened. It should be borne in mind that what appeared to be resistance to this alien King by the Sinhalese-Kandyan elite was very much motivated by the power struggle between the King and a few prominent courtiers. In any case, the conflict led to the point at which Kirti Sri's opponents were ready to replace him with another foreign, Buddhist prince, especially since the jealousy among themselves prevented the selection of one of their own to assume the throne. By July 1760, they had convinced Thepphiphit to take part in their assassination attempt on King Kirti Sri, a plot which failed miserably. The King now forced the Dutch to deport the Thai Prince and his monks back to Siam.¹²² In 1761, Thepphiphit arrived in Mergui and was confined there by order of King Ekathat, who apparently wanted to keep the Prince away from his connections in the capital.

Sensing some advantage, before the Dutch transported Thepphiphit back to Siam, they had tried to make a secret deal with him. It is not known whether the Company was directly involved in the attempted coup of 1760 in Kandy; however, its policy makers clearly wanted to replace Kirti Sri with a Thai Prince, who was to be the VOC puppet on the Kandyan throne. By that time, the possibility of open warfare with Kandy was imminent. Certainly, the long-term interactions, including their efforts to send Thai monks to Kandy since 1751 had broadened their understanding of the cultural similarity between Ayutthaya and Kandy. At that time, the Dutch believed that, while the Sinhalese would not accept the Christian Dutch as an alternative to the Hindu-Nayakkar rulers and 'would rather sacrifice their lives in order to preserve Buddhism', they would be able to accept the Buddhist Prince Thepphiphit—whom they believed to be popular among the Sinhalese—or failing that, his son.¹²³

In September 1762, on the advice of the Governor of Ceylon, Lubbert Jan van Eck (1762-5), a Dutch ambassador was sent to Ayutthaya to con-

duct secret negotiations with the Siamese court: to obtain the person of Prince Thepphiphit or his son(s).¹²⁴ Ambassador Marten Huysvoorn, who was informed of local affairs by Werndlij, described Siam as being in a 'state of confusion'. The court was hesitant to receive him because it suspected the intentions of the Dutch. While the Dutch were willing to allow the Siamese to inspect their three ships, contrary to their usual practice, they refused to reveal the purpose of their mission to the *khunnang*. They wanted to reserve this for discussions with the King himself.¹²⁵

Meanwhile, rumours spread that Thepphiphit was coming to Ayutthaya from Mergui (or Tenasserim) and that the Dutch wanted to help him claim the Siamese throne. The Dutch believed that the ruling ministers were afraid that the Prince would take revenge on them. They also thought that Thepphiphit's life had been spared by Prince Uthumphon, who longed to see him again. However, they were not certain about what the Princesses really thought of Thepphiphit because, at one time, they seemed to protect him and, at another time, they did not.¹²⁶

Werndlij tried to obtain a state reception from the court so that Huysvoorn would have a chance to appear before the King. The *Phrakhlang* rejected Dutch requests to meet King Ekathat on the grounds that their Ambassador was merely a representative of the Governor-General and not of a monarch. Apparently, the Dutch were so enthusiastic about their Kandy plot that they forgot what they had learnt about Siamese diplomatic protocol in over a century. Having failed to obtain an audience with the King, Huysvoorn was ready to accept the second best option of meeting the *Phrakhlang* and asked to be allowed to approach the Dutch lodge in Ayutthaya because his crew urgently needed to refresh themselves. Finally, on 26 October, thirty-three days after its arrival, the embassy was allowed to sail up to Ayutthaya. At this time an unequivocal message was passed on as the *Phrakhlang* sent only some low-ranking officials to inquire about the Ambassador's business. At this point, Huysvoorn and his men realized that their mission would achieve nothing, and they decided to depart from Ayutthaya on 10 November.¹²⁷

Huysvoorn's assessment of his failure deserves special attention, as it reflects Dutch understanding of Siamese politics at that time. First of all, he pointed out that the Company had made a mistake in not realizing the hatred King Ekathat bore towards Prince Thepphiphit. Now the Dutch even risked their position by being seen as co-operating with or showing respect to the Prince.¹²⁸ On the next point, the Ambassador defended his decision to leave Siam without having achieved anything by adducing the argument that none of the solutions which the members of his embassy could think of was plausible. Keeping the affair secret was decisive to this mission but keeping a secret was as good as impossible in Siam. There-

fore, even if the incumbent *Phrakhlang*, who usually gave no audience to foreigners, should have a meeting with the Dutch Ambassador, it would have been attended by other officials. It was a known fact of the time that the Siamese court was ever-anxious about any possibility of someone plotting against the King. Consequently, not even a high-ranking official felt free to speak to another; instead they always had to meet in the presence of a third person. The Dutch were afraid that their plan would be widely revealed and reach the ears of the English Captain 'Poni', or William Powney, who might take the news to his people in Coromandel, and that in turn might jeopardize the VOC's interests in Ceylon.¹²⁹ Of course, the Dutch had thought about contriving a story to cover their real purpose. Their option was to tell the *Phrakhlang* that they needed the help of Thepphiphit's sons in arbitrating between the Kandyan King and the VOC, without showing the letter from the Governor-General which asked precisely for the renegade Prince. However, the Dutch were certain that the Siamese would not be convinced by this ploy without first having seen a formal letter from Batavia. Quite frankly, the Dutch did not believe that the incumbent *Phrakhlang* had the competence and enjoyed the esteem to push their request through at court because he came from the lowest rank and held this office only provisionally. Nor was it recommended to motivate the Siamese officials by money and gifts because they all were unreliable. Therefore, when Okphra Choduek offered his help to the VOC to contact the court, they believed that he only wanted to earn some presents and discover the secret business of the Dutch.¹³⁰ Lastly, it seemed impossible that the Dutch could deal secretly with any local person who could help 'obtain' Prince Thepphiphit and/or his sons without the court's permission. The followers of the Prince themselves were not available because they had been mercilessly persecuted. In addition, even if the Dutch had succeeded in picking the Prince up at Mergui, the court would punish the VOC men left in Ayutthaya for their actions.¹³¹

In 1764, Van Eck sent Willem van Damast Limberger on a secret mission to look for Prince Thepphiphit in Siam again. Now, assistance was offered by a former Roman Catholic priest, Manuel de St. Joachim. The Portuguese ex-priest claimed that he had a good knowledge of Siam and its court in Ayutthaya and that he had been forced out of the kingdom by the French priests as punishment for his conversion to Protestantism. His knowledge of Siam must have been impressive enough to convince Van Eck to recruit him, but his offer to procure Thepphiphit led to complete disappointment. Considering his past, it was natural that De St. Joachim should accuse the French bishop in Ayutthaya of fuelling the Siamese court's suspicion of the Huysvoorn mission. But the question is whether the court of Ayutthaya, which for decades had been traditionally sceptical of the French, would have asked for their advice. While De St.

Joachim claimed that Thepphiphit had agreed to go with the Dutch, Van Damast Limberger finally learnt the truth, namely that the Prince was heavily guarded in Tenasserim without any chance to communicate with outsiders. In the end, Van Damast Limberger had an opportunity to meet the Governor of Tenasserim, who revealed that De St. Joachim was an outright scoundrel and advised the Dutch to 'follow the procedure'—to make a written request for Prince Thepphiphit and to submit it to the Ayutthayan court.¹³² However, the Burmese advance at the end of that year forced the Dutch to flee from Mergui, and the following full-scale Burmese invasion of Siam at last brought the whole enterprise to an end.

The Last Decisions of the Dutch

Since the end of the 1750s, the VOC employees in Ayutthaya had repeatedly recommended that the Company should withdraw from Siam rather than have an empty ship returning annually to Batavia. Yet, the decision of the High Government to close down the office in Ayutthaya dated 25 October 1762 had not been implemented because of the above-mentioned ambitious design regarding Ceylon.¹³³ After all, the Company was still not ready to give up its post in Ayutthaya. Batavia even recommended selling the lodge and renting other premises, probably in the hope of saving repair costs or making a profit out of its sale. Werndlij, who advocated the idea of withdrawal, disagreed with this proposal. His first objection was that it would be difficult to sell such a big building, since none of the locals could afford to pay more than one-tenth of its value and its European-style architecture was different from indigenous architecture. Another problem was that the Siamese court would interpret the selling of the lodge, which Batavia recommended as a means to rescue the Ayutthaya office, as a sign of the Company's disengagement from Siam and would make business and life difficult for the Dutch there as a punishment. Lastly, the VOC would not find a better location and a well-built edifice anywhere else. Indigenous houses were constructed of bamboo and could not protect the goods in store from theft. Werndlij added that should the VOC eventually depart, the King would seize its lodge as his possession like he had taken the English building, and then lease it to foreigners. The English traders who had returned were now obliged to stay in their former lodge and had to pay a handsome rent to the King. The Dutch would face the same situation should they return.¹³⁴

In 1763, without hope of obtaining a full cargo of sappanwood for their ship, the Dutch decided to send it back to Batavia virtually empty. At this point, the court made a conciliatory gesture. It asked the Dutch to delay the departure of their ship by promising to pay the King's debt

in cash for that part of sappanwood and tin the court was unable to supply. In his letter to the Governor-General, the *Phrakhlang* excused himself for the delay in loading the VOC ship saying that the 'yellow fever' had killed many people including labourers under his command.¹³⁵ The VOC men in Ayutthaya attributed the decline in the Company's trade not only to the lack of labour, but also to the inefficiency of the Siamese administration. The incompetence of the incumbent *Phrakhlang* was known even to King Ekathat and convinced him to ask the former *Phrakhlang* to return to office. However, this grandee refused to take up his old position unless the King were to guarantee him freedom from the capricious interventions by the 'greedy' and 'power-hungry' princesses and ministers. Although the King wanted to give him such an assurance, he was prevented from doing so by his sisters and ministers.¹³⁶

It is not clear how but, on 15 September 1763, the 'good' *Phrakhlang* did give up monkhood and returned to his office, to the delight of the Dutch and the people in general. The Dutch and all the other foreigners queued up to congratulate him. The Minister asked Werndlij to come later to brief him on the development of the Company's affairs during his absence. The problems of the VOC remained very much the same as they had been before his resignation. The Minister insisted that he could not help reduce the price of the commodities since it was impossible to alter traditional practice and the Dutch had already been paying less than other foreigners. At last, Werndlij conceded because he saw no chance that the Siamese would 'alter their custom', especially when it could disadvantage them.¹³⁷ Despite the optimism his return had generated, the 'good' *Phrakhlang* eventually did not contribute much to the improvement of the VOC's trade in the kingdom, which declined sharply after the Burmese attack.

The next year, 1764, was another normal year for the Dutch in Siam. As negotiations on the prices of important commodities dragged on endlessly, gift-giving was still required and yet yielded no fruits. The *Phrakhlang* preferred to discuss business with the Dutch in a public gathering—to avoid any suspicion. The King and his court members departed for the annual journey to Phra Phutthabat, which, as usual, left the VOC's business unfinished. Despite all the frustration and delays, Werndlij was appointed Okluang Surasen, which signified that the Dutch were still respected at the Siamese court.¹³⁸

However, in 1765, Werndlij reported that the whole situation was changing. In January, Ayutthaya received reports that the Burmese had ransacked Tavoy, Mergui, and Tenasserim and had massacred members of the population who failed to escape. This news threw the court and the commoners in the capital into a state of consternation. The authorities prepared for the defence of the capital, among other measures, by barri-

cading the toll houses to prevent the passing of any ship bigger than a *prahu*.¹³⁹

From February 1765, the areas west of Ayutthaya—between Tavoy and the Chao Phraya River—to Ligor and Kedah in the south fell to the Burmese forces one after another. Werndlij was frustrated that the Siamese did not do anything to defend these economically significant areas, where sappanwood, tin, lead, and elephant tusks were procured.¹⁴⁰ He also mentioned that the court was paralysed by the discord between the ‘old and new ministers’ as well as the differences between the ‘Princesses’, and consequently did not pay enough attention to the danger it was in. Meanwhile, the Burmese ordered Siamese subjects in the places they had conquered to co-operate and obtain mercy, or, if they resisted, they would face slavery or ‘be cooked in a pan’. A considerable number of people, especially those with families, surrendered to the Burmese to spare themselves and their kin from brutal maltreatment. Having strengthened its position in those conquered places, Burma now set its sights on the capital city.

In May, the Ayutthayan court still did not know how to stop the advancing enemy troops. The King grew so dismayed that he announced he would richly reward anyone who could come up with a solution how to defend the city against the Burmese. Everyone tried his best. Many came up with ‘ridiculous’ propositions. Many ideas were carried out. Unfortunately, Werndlij considered it unnecessary to relate the details of these proposed schemes to Batavia. He only concluded that ‘this great and notable kingdom, and a nation that otherwise was so sensible now seemed like a complete theatre of follies’.¹⁴¹

Hindered by the heavy rainfall, the Burmese had to halt their advance. In June, their forces started splitting up and resting. They sent people to sow the fields and build storehouses for provisions. Werndlij remarked that the Burmese did all this calmly as if they were in their own country, without being interrupted by the Siamese. Meanwhile, the Siamese court was recruiting soldiers and managed to gather around 15,000-16,000 men within a short time and station them in and around Ayutthaya. Unfortunately, because these men received no maintenance, they soon became ‘the second enemy’: most of them turned to thieving and some of them deserted. By the end of the month, it was reported that the Burmese planned to attack Bangkok. Werndlij gives substantial information about the defence preparations down the Chao Phraya River, possibly because it was the route both essential and accessible to the Dutch and their lodge. The defence of Bangkok was very important because the town supplied everything Ayutthaya needed to survive: without it the capital could easily be starved. The royal treasurer, Phraya Ratchapakdi, was dispatched with 4,000 men to guard Bangkok. Phraya Yommarat led 2,000 men to

protect Talad Khwan. Meanwhile, 1,000 men with three galleons from Ligor were assigned to protect Mae Klong. Cannons were mounted on the fortress on the western side of the river, Thonburi. A thick and heavy chain was stretched across the river. An armed ship 110 feet long was stationed in the middle of the river. The Burmese, however, prepared boats and mounted cannon on the bow and the stern of each boat. In the meantime, another Burmese army camped north of Ayutthaya. The enemy troops were waiting for the waters to recede to attack the city from the north and the south.¹⁴²

In August, the Burmese managed to conquer Mae Klong. The majority of the Ligor troops were killed. Their galleons were seized by the enemy and used to attack Bangkok. On 29 August, the Burmese succeeded in conquering Bangkok 'without any resistance', and blew up the fortress in Thonburi. They killed everyone and burnt down everything up to fifteen miles away from the VOC lodge. By permission of the Siamese court, Werndlij had the Dutch lodge fortified with heavy planks and guns. Europeans and local Christians kept watch day and night. He thought that the enemy was coming but it did not. However, on 7 September, the supervisor of the Amsterdam reported that the Burmese had destroyed both the village and the warehouse. Less than half of the 378,779 pounds of sappanwood in VOC possession was saved. The Company also lost the gunpowder which Werndlij had sent there in April. The Burmese retired to their headquarters, located three miles west of Bangkok.¹⁴³

Contrary to Wood and Hutchinson's claims that the Siamese court arrogantly refused the help offered by the English Captain Powney,¹⁴⁴ the Dutch reported that it did indeed look to all foreigners for help to fight the Burmese 'whom they knew they [alone] could not fight'. Powney had arrived with a ship and two brigantines from Bombay, carrying a letter from its Governor and exotic gifts for the court consisting of two lions and one Persian horse. The letter complained about the bad treatment Powney had received from the Siamese officials in 1762, when he had come to present the request of the Governor of Bombay for the right to free trade and exemption from taxes. Now the Siamese court promised the Englishman that it would grant his request, if he were to sail up to the capital with his ships. Powney went down to sail his vessels into the Chao Phraya River. However, according to the Dutch, after his request to be exempted from taxation had been granted, Powney remained in Bangkok with his fleet 'out of fear of the Burmese'. From there, he tried to sell 300 packs of linen but, up to the time the Dutch departed, he had not succeeded in finding any customer. Werndlij wrote that everyone from the King to the humblest person prepared themselves and their money to flee to Cambodia should the enemy attack the capital.¹⁴⁵

In the course of 1765, the Dutch were forced to defend their lodge

against some small Burmese forces several times. Considering the threat deadly, Werndlij prepared to evacuate his people from Ayutthaya. Since he did not want to leave the fifty-two packs of linen to be taken by Burmese soldiers or Siamese looters, and knew that such a voluminous cargo could not pass the customs houses and reach a Dutch ship at the river mouth without being noticed, he planned to deliver them to the Royal Warehouse and ask for a receipt. If the city did not fall to the enemy, the Company could still hope for a future payment from the court. Should the Burmese approach Ayutthaya, the Dutch planned to force through the customs houses and the barricades, taking with them only the Company cash, and go to the warehouse Amsterdam, where they could await the news of developments in Ayutthaya or find an opportunity to leave for Batavia or Malacca.¹⁴⁶

Under these circumstances, the Dutch *Resident* found himself faced with all kinds of practical problems. The Siamese prevented anyone from escaping by closing all the checkpoints. Since the people in the settlement had fled away, there was no carpenter available to repair the boat destined for the escape. Having no more than a scribe and two sailors to assist him, Werndlij had to ask the *Phrakhläng* for permission to strengthen the Dutch lodge in the way the French and Portuguese settlements were doing, namely by recruiting the indigenous inhabitants of the settlement—who were not in the King's service—to guard the lodge. With the approval of some other 'old officials', the Minister gave his permission but still required the Dutch to deliver a written petition which he could present to the King the following morning.

However, King Ekathat rejected this petition on account of the 'new ministers', without whom he 'could not and did not want' to make any decision, and who constantly worked together to turn down any proposals made by the *Phrakhläng*. Werndlij even received some 'insulting' advice from the court, namely that he should learn how to defend the lodge from the French bishop. According to the court, the bishop had managed to defend not only his church, but the whole camp without any reinforcements during the first invasion. Werndlij felt like giving a stinging reply but he knew that it was useless, for the interpreter would not dare to translate his precise words because 'the Siamese were used to submissive flattering language'. Werndlij finally found his own solution by hiring ten indigenous Christians for the defence of the lodge and training them to use guns.¹⁴⁷

Now the letters from the Governor-General arrived at the moment at which the Siamese had nothing left but 'their capital city, an empty royal treasury, and a confused council'. The *Phrakhläng* let the Dutch know that he had no time to accept the letters and gifts in the customary manner, and that the city gates were barricaded. Werndlij for his part kept the

order from the High Government to close down the office secret.¹⁴⁸ He was afraid that if the Siamese court knew of it, it would be even stricter with the Dutch and refuse to pay its debts. The Dutch still tried to procure some return cargo, asking for tin and sappanwood as payment for the gifts from Batavia, and to have the King's debt paid. The former was to no avail as the provinces which supplied the wood had already fallen into Burmese hands. To make the situation worse, the Governor of Ligor no longer complied with the court's orders.

At last, the Company boat was repaired and stood ready for the escape. Rice, obtained at a high price, was secretly loaded onto the vessel for sustenance during the journey. However, the movements of the Dutch were noticed by the Siamese officials. On 28 October, the interpreter for the Dutch was summoned to Okphra Choduek (the King's brother-in-law) and interrogated with menaces. He admitted that the Dutch were loading all the Company and household stuff onto the boat. On the following day, while Werndlij still wanted to request an audience with the *Phrakhleng*, the interpreter came back from the city proper to warn the Dutch that the court planned to take the Dutch children into custody and seize the lodge. Fearing a repetition of the traumatizing siege of the VOC lodge by the Siamese authorities in 1740, the Dutch decided that they had to leave the city that very same night. They expected that the Siamese would fear the enemy too much to follow them. Assistant Johannes van den Berg, who was supposed to remain behind to take charge of the Company affairs in Ayutthaya according to the original order from Batavia, now begged to be allowed to leave with Werndlij because, in this situation, he could not possibly defend the lodge and he was afraid for the lives of his pregnant wife and children from the menace of both the Siamese and Burmese. Werndlij and the ship's authorities agreed to take them on board, together with Michiel Bang and his two sisters, the former interpreter Gaudentie Estevens, the warehouse keeper Christian Botsberg and family, and the widow of the former employee Michiel Corbonne and her children. The *Resident* decided to take the Corbonne children because he was informed that, after the office closure in 1740, the Dutch children had been made slaves and especially girls had been treated miserably, except for those who had enough resources to buy their own freedom. Supervision of the lodge was transferred to the interpreter who, as a local, was supposed to be able to cope with the situation better.¹⁴⁹

Werndlij and his entourage managed to reach the mouth of the Chao Phraya River safely. From there, they sent a letter in Portuguese to explain their action to the *Phrakhleng*. However, the court's attention was diverted not only by the approach of the enemy forces, but also by the escape of a prince called Chaofa Chit ('Tjauw va Tjit') from his prison to

Uthumphon's protection.¹⁵⁰ Force of circumstance caused the Dutch to decide to wait no longer for the court's permission to depart, and therefore, in the middle of November 1765, they sailed off to Batavia. Botsberg managed to use an English boat to help transport the remaining sappanwood to the Dutch ship at the last minute. Werndlij must have realized how fortunate he and his people were to escape successfully because, at their departure, two junks from Semarang and Cirebon, which had arrived with sugar and some small commodities, were detained by the Siamese.¹⁵¹

Only in April 1768 did Batavia acquire interviews with two eyewitnesses of the fall of Ayutthaya: the Armenian Anthony Goyaton—who claimed to be the former head of the Europeans in Siam, and an Arab priest, Seyed Ali.¹⁵² Through these accounts, we have a picture of the last days of Ayutthaya, which, of course, also differs from other accounts.¹⁵³ According to these two men, the Siamese capital fell to the Burmese who received aid from the Burmese captives inside the city and 'reduced it entirely to ashes' in March 1767. Having killed 'most of the inhabitants', they led the survivors, including ex-King Uthumphon and the *Phrakhlung* back to Burma. On the way, the former succumbed to illness, and the latter took poison. King Ekathat was allegedly murdered the same night by the Siamese. The Company's lodge was burnt down. The former acquaintance of the Dutch Prince Thepphiphit had previously fled from Tenasserim and re-started his political adventure but was finally defeated by General Taksin, later King of the short-lived Thonburi Period (1767-82).¹⁵⁴ The two eyewitnesses also told Batavia that, after the Burmese withdrawal, some Siamese quickly resettled around the former French fort at Thonburi and started trading again.

Conclusion

Judged by Dutch participation in Siamese court ceremony, the VOC men of the eighteenth century still mastered the language of ritual which had been passed down from many generations of their predecessors. Though from a less privileged position, they were still able to perceive the changing power relations at the court of Ayutthaya in its last decades. The Dutch representation of King Borommakot is after all reminiscent of their observation of King Prasatthong, especially their references to his alternating use of arbitrary power and splendour to persuade the Dutch to make concessions. But it also shows a profound difference between the two rulers. King Borommakot had to allow a considerable number of his children and officials to join in the pursuit of power and wealth—espe-

cially through trade—, whereas King Prasatthong was more successful in keeping these to himself. The new power situation disturbed Dutch interests as it increased competition in trade in Siam. What the Dutch repeatedly mentioned as ‘abuse’ or ‘extortion’ by the *chao* and the *khunnang*, which suggests a state of moral decline, should be seen in terms of the new division of power. Another important aspect of the sharing of power and wealth can be found in the life-style of the prominent court members. As Dutch sources reveal, Borommakot’s officials lived a cosmopolitan, material life, to almost as great an extent as the King did.

By sharing resources with his power-seeking court members and by exercising his ruthlessness against them, King Borommakot kept a firm control over them throughout his long reign. His sons, Uthumphon and Ekathat, were incapable of defending their power from being usurped by their own siblings and servants, who did not act in concert but were extremely divided among themselves. Ironically, in the end, the Dutch understanding of the new power relations among the Siamese elite only made them realize that they no longer had anyone to turn to for help.

Despite all the difficulties with which its men were constantly confronted, the VOC did not give up its place in Siam easily. The Thai kingdom may have lost the best of its commercial profitability for the Company, but it had gained political, strategic importance as part of the Dutch scheme in Ceylon. However, those experiments failed too. The Dutch support in the successful religious and diplomatic contacts between Ayutthaya and Kandy did not lead to a sustainable improvement in both their relationships, either with the Kandyan King or with the Siamese court. When the Dutch went so far as to try to make use of their understanding of the politics of Kandy, in reviving the idea entertained by some locals of replacing its King with a Thai prince, they failed because they did not fully fathom the political climate in Siam, and hence did not manage to obtain a Thai royal to occupy the Kandyan throne.

Although the VOC men did not experience the last days of Ayutthaya directly, their records are still helpful in understanding the situation in the kingdom before its downfall. In her analysis of the social and political organization during the Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty, Busakorn Lailert Kanchanachari has asserted that the pre-conditions of Ayutthaya’s defeat at Burmese hands in 1767 were the three structural weaknesses of the kingdom: the factiousness among the *chao*; the loss of the *phrai* thanks to the ineffective registration system; and the ill-judged optimism of the Thai political elite which allowed the Burmese to catch them off-guard.¹⁵⁵ The Dutch experience during King Ekathat’s reign and during both Burmese invasions, strictly speaking, supports the point about the weak leadership and ineffective administration in general. The Dutch did not explicitly mention optimism or disbelief among court members, but

rather emphasized the confusion and disagreements at court. The loss of the *phrai* was a matter probably beyond their knowledge; still, the Dutch believed that the court failed to control the men recruited to defend the capital, which again points to incompetent leadership.

CONCLUSION

This study of the interactions between the VOC employees and the members of the court of Ayutthaya shows how over the years 'fixed Dutch/European categories' of the Siamese court elite were created. The Dutch perceptions of the Siamese court in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries generally agreed with contemporary European views of the 'absolute power' of the Siamese king and the 'splendour' of his court, which both in Dutch/European and in Thai terms served to manifest his power. To a large extent, Dutch accounts, such as the work of Schouten, were even the main source of European perceptions of Siam.

Although these few 'fixed categories' did not change dramatically over time, it is possible to see how the Dutch adapted themselves to an environment which, if it were to allow them their trade, needed to be understood at various cultural and political levels. To show and understand the Dutch awareness of this cultural-political situation, this study has analysed the nearly two centuries of Dutch-Thai interaction under the aegis of the VOC.

From the beginning, the Dutch were awed by the 'absolute power' and 'splendour' of the Siamese King, which they sometimes regarded as unjust and wasteful. Despite such misgivings, they quickly recognized the centripetal force of the Ayutthayan court, into which they themselves were drawn, as they were dependent on the King's favour, as were all other court members. To communicate with the King more effectively, the Dutch mastered the Siamese 'language of ritual'. They also learnt to recognize the general and personal needs of each Siamese ruler and his entourage and made use of that understanding. Through all this, they also gained a working knowledge of the political reality of the kingdom. This knowledge of things Thai—their 'cultural capital', so to say—was essential if they were to realize their prime goal, namely the establishment and operation of trading relations with the Ayutthaya Kingdom.

Undoubtedly, many Europeans deemed accepting Siamese court etiquette to be a gesture of submission to this oriental King. Even so, the VOC men, known for their pragmatism, were more often than not flexible enough to observe the many intricacies of local custom. They often did follow local protocol because they genuinely understood the significance of ceremony and deference. They only tried to resist when a ceremony or a contribution implied that they were bowing to a non-Christian religion and jarred their religious conscience. Even so, the

Dutch and the Siamese often reached a compromise, especially because this would please the Siamese King.

The Dutch were aware of the vicissitudes at court and tried to adjust to them, above all by re-inventing their own functions to suit the specific needs of each Siamese King. Having established themselves in the commercial and diplomatic order of Siam during the reigns of Kings Ekathotsarot and Songtham, the Dutch further strengthened their position by forging a political and military alliance with King Prasatthong. After diplomacy and military alliance had lost their prominence or practicability, the Dutch retained King Narai's favour by supporting the expansion of his personal world to meet the wider one. More serious problems occurred when the following Kings Phetracha and Süa considered neither Europeans trustworthy allies nor European culture a prominent element in court prestige. Nevertheless, for the rest of the time, the Dutch remained Siam's most important European trade partner and the Kings' indispensable link to the outside world.

Not only the political and economic conditions but also the social and cultural life of each reign was defined to a large extent by the personal strengths, or weaknesses, and personal interests of each ruler. The history of the Ayutthayan court as seen through Dutch eyes shows a constant power struggle between individuals and between interest groups. In the reality of Siamese politics, the Dutch also saw that the 'absolute power' of its King had its limits, as proven by the recurrent succession conflicts and the increasing need for power-sharing experienced by the Kings of the eighteenth century. What the Dutch observed even more clearly in their daily experience was that the *khunnang*—who were both partners and competitors of the Dutch—protected their interests by trying to manipulate the King's knowledge of the precise circumstances of politics and trade. The Kings responded by tolerating this manipulation; sometimes fighting back to reclaim control; sometimes feeling powerless against it.

Dutch understanding of the power relations among the Siamese elite did not always help them out. Especially in the seventeenth century, the Dutch often felt that the Kings were kept blind by their officials to the injustices done to them. However, studying Dutch sources, it is fairly obvious that Kings may have chosen deliberately to turn a blind eye to these injustices every now and again. Consequently, the claim by the VOC employees that the ruler had no knowledge of the miseries his servants caused them seemed in a way a strategy which helped the Dutch to survive in Siam rather than to reflect reality. Notably, the tendency to stress the role of the King as the 'last instance' to whom the Dutch looked for succour' grew less from the last decade of the seventeenth century; the disappearance of this 'topos' also reflected the fact that, gradually, the

Dutch lost their position as the 'most favourite nation' of the Siamese King.

The VOC records contain many negative descriptions of the Siamese, disparaging them as 'greedy', 'lazy', 'inefficient', and 'arrogant'. Dutch/European categories often appear in binary opposition to what the Dutch perceived to be the innate characteristics of the Siamese. Therefore, there are such oppositions posed as free Dutchman versus servile Siamese (which again reinforced the notion of absolute kingship) and rational Christian versus credulous heathen. Moreover, less surprising in a people absorbed principally by trade, the avarice of the court members is an always dominant topic. Van Alderwereld's instruction of 1731 reflects the past, the present, and the future of the typical Dutch perception of Siamese morality as well as the standard code of conduct for the Company men. Ascribing the hardships of the Dutch to the 'greed' of the Siamese, he could only advise his colleagues to find and cling to a 'middle course' of being neither too compliant nor too resistant.² Certainly, it was easier said than done. That the Dutch often described the behaviour and attitudes of the *khunnang* and the court servants as 'greedy' reflected their view that these people selfishly put their personal interests before their duties. On the other hand, the accusation seems to have been a universal explanation which the Company men applied to the Siamese Government and to individuals at the court, whenever they tried to excuse their own failure in the commercial negotiations with the Siamese to their superiors. In some cases, the Dutch actually showed that they, though unwillingly, understood that the discriminatory trade practices of the court were a means to solve its own problems, such as to fill the royal treasury emptied as a result of war efforts or of the politics of power consolidation of a new king. While condemning Siamese 'greediness' and 'corruption', the Company servants constantly oiled their relationship with their host by means of giving 'gifts' or 'bribes'. Such a contradiction between moral criticism and political practice is reminiscent of the present-day 'business culture' conducted between some Western companies and governments in the developing world.

The mindset of the European employees of the Dutch Company was structured partly by a profit-oriented outlook—which largely determined their tactics of either diplomacy or force, in dealing with their Asian counterparts—and partly by a sense of the cultural differences between them and the Asians they encountered. In practice, the need of the VOC men-on-the-spot to reconcile these two aspects in order to survive in Siam—where the host society basically had the power to dictate their lives—often resulted in pragmatic decisions, especially to be 'diplomatic', which sometimes contradicted what they considered right or acceptable

judged by the standards of Company policy, or as a matter of fact their personal norms and values.

Without denying the significance of the awareness of cultural differences, this study shows that, for the VOC merchants, it was often rather their work situation—living in Siam and negotiating with its court—than their intellectual convictions which gave them grounds to criticize the Siamese. Van Vliet had condemned the usurpation of King Prasatthong who treated the Dutch harshly, but one of his successors, Keijts, welcomed the power seizure by King Phetracha, hoping to be in favour with the new ruler. Other VOC observers reported the succession conflicts in Siam, which did not affect them directly, in a rather matter-of-fact way, considering these a common, almost cyclical development in the skein of life in Siam, without necessarily attempting a comparison between Siamese and European political cultures. Although the Dutch frequently criticized the Siamese court, they did not try to impose their own values upon their hosts.³ This, in a way, makes these VOC merchants more objective than their intellectual contemporaries in Europe who tended to draw moral conclusions from the travel accounts they read and who grew intellectually disenchanted with Asia when they felt that they could learn no more from the East.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Europeans were extending their influence in many parts of Asia. But in Siam, the Dutch remained largely at the mercy of the court of Ayutthaya, and that situation forced them to develop a collective policy and a personal strategy to deal with it. When Burma invaded Ayutthaya in 1765-7, the relationship the Dutch had cultivated, with perseverance and adaptability, which had lasted for about 160 years, came to an end as a result of local rather than global developments.

NOTES

Notes to Introduction

¹ This is the central idea in Holden Furber, 'Asia and the West as Partners before "Empire" and after', *JAS* 28/4 (1969), 711-21; see also id., *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976).

² Barbara Watson Andaya, *To Live as Brothers: Southeast Sumatra in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), xiv (citation).

³ Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Entzauberung Asiens: Europa und die asiatischen Reiche im 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Beck, 1998).

⁴ John Anderson, *English Intercourse with Siam in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1890), 389-90; E. W. Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam in the Seventeenth Century* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1940), 192.

⁵ The view of the eighteenth century as a period of decline has often been applied not only to Ayutthaya but to most parts of South-East Asia. See the comment by David K. Wyatt, 'The Eighteenth Century in Southeast Asia', in Leonard Blussé and Femme Gastra (eds.), *On the Eighteenth Century as a Category of Asian History: Van Leur in Retrospect* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 39-55, esp. 40.

⁶ Dirk van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West 1500-1700*, tr. Michael Smithies (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2002), xvii-xviii. (First published in French 1991.)

⁷ George Vinal Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand* (Illinois: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1977).

⁸ Han ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat: A History of the Contacts between The Netherlands and Thailand* (Lochem-Gent: De Tijdstroom, 1987).

⁹ Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'A Political History of Siam under the Prasatthong Dynasty, 1629-1688' (Diss., University of London, 1984); id., 'Ayutthaya at the End of the Seventeenth Century: Was There a Shift to Isolation?', in Anthony Reid (ed.), *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power, and Belief* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), 250-72; id., 'Princes, Pretenders, and the Chinese *Phrakhläng*: An Analysis of the Dutch Evidence Concerning Siamese Court Politics, 1699-1734', in Blussé and Gastra (eds.), *On the Eighteenth Century*, 107-30; see also the short analysis of Ayutthaya's trade in the first half of the eighteenth century, especially the difficult 1730s, in Remco Raben and Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'Tipping Balances: King Borommakot and the Dutch East India Company', in id. (eds.), *In the King's Trail: An 18th Century Dutch Journey to the Buddha's Footprint; Theodorus Jacobus van den Heuvel's Account of his Voyage to Phra Phutthabat in 1737* (Bangkok: The Royal Netherlands Embassy, 1997), 63-79, esp. 64-6, 69-70. The difficulties in foreign trade did not necessarily affect the cultural prosperity of King Borommakot's reign (r. 1733-1758).

¹⁰ For example, W. A. R. Wood, *A History of Siam* (Bangkok: Chalermit Bookshop, 1959), 194-215; Rong Syamananda, *A History of Thailand* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University/Thai Wattana Panich, 1977), 72-82.

¹¹ Smith has emphasized that, during the period between 1664 and the early 1680s, the VOC and the Ayutthayan court enjoyed a fine relationship. Smith, *The Dutch*, 41. Vilailekha Thavornthanasan has shown that King Narai's decision to move his court farther inland to Lopburi and to favour the French in the 1670s was personal rather than political (that is, fear of a Dutch threat). Vilailekha Thavornthanasan, 'The Role of Lopburi during the Reign of King Narai, A.D. 1656-1688', in Ronald D. Renard (ed.), *Anuson Walter Vella* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii at Manoa, Center for Asian and Pacific Studies, 1986), 134-55. Nidhi Aeusrivongse has convincingly explained that King Narai used foreigners in his service to counterbalance the power of indigenous administrative officials. His explanation emphasizes internal politics—instead of the contacts with the West—as a moving force in the history of the period. Nidhi Aeusrivongse, *kan muang*

thai samai phra narai [Thai Politics during King Narai's Reign] (1980; repr., Bangkok: Matichon, [1996]).

¹² Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'The Dutch-Siamese Conflict of 1663-1664: A Reassessment', in Leonard Blussé (ed.), *Around and About Formosa: Essays in Honor of Professor Ts'ao Yung-ho* (Taipei: Ts'ao Yung-ho Foundation for Culture and Education, 2003), 291-306, esp. 305-6.

¹³ Jeremy Kemp, *Aspects of Siamese Kingship in the Seventeenth Century* (Bangkok: Social Science Association Press of Thailand, 1969), 8.

¹⁴ Dhiravat na Pombejra, *Siamese Court Life in the Seventeenth Century as Depicted in European Sources* (Bangkok: Faculty of Arts Chulalongkorn University International Series No. 1, 2001).

¹⁵ Eleanor Gibson, *Principles of Perceptual Learning and Development* (New York: Meredith Corporation, 1969), 3-4, 13-17.

¹⁶ Jurrien van Goor, 'Introduction', in id. (ed.), *Trading Companies in Asia 1600-1830* (Utrecht: HES, 1986), 9-17, esp. 10.

¹⁷ Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680*, I: *The Land below the Winds* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) and II: *Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). Reid has emphasized the significance of trade and other 'maritime intercourse' in the historic integration processes of South-East Asia.

¹⁸ David K. Wyatt, 'King Borommakot, his Court, and their World', in Raben and Dhiravat (eds.), *In the King's Trail*, 53-62, esp. 55.

¹⁹ David Cannadine, 'Introduction: Divine Rites of Kings', in id. and Simon Price (eds.), *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-19. Cannadine suggests a functional relationship between 'power and pomp' in the way that 'pomp' often serves as an instrument of power used for representing, demonstrating, and hence reifying power itself.

²⁰ NA, Collectie Hudde, no. 5, Consideratiën van Van Beuningen, cited in Femme Gastra, *The Dutch East India Company: Expansion and Decline* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2003), 57.

²¹ George Winius and Markus Vink, *The Merchant-Warrior Pacified: The VOC (The Dutch East India Company) and its Changing Political Economy in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991).

²² Reinout Vos, *Gentle Janus, Merchant Prince: The VOC and the Tightrope of Diplomacy in the Malay World, 1740-1800* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1993).

²³ See also Jurrien van Goor, 'A Hybrid State: The Dutch Economic and Political Network in Asia', in Claude Guillot, Denys Lombard and Roderich Ptak (eds.), *From the Mediterranean to the China Sea* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998), 193-214.

²⁴ Ibid. 1-2.

²⁵ Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 318-22.

²⁶ For the foundation and organization of the VOC, see Gastra, *The Dutch East India Company*, Chapter 1.

²⁷ For the VOC's intra-Asian trade, see *ibid.*, Chapter 4, esp. 108-24.

²⁸ The most recent literature increasingly emphasizes that adapting to local conditions was an important factor in the Company's success. See the analysis of the changing trends in the VOC historiography in Jurrien van Goor, 'The Dutch East India Company, Merchant and King', in id., *Prelude to Colonialism: The Dutch in Asia* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2004), 7-25.

²⁹ Leonard Blussé, *Tussen geveinsde vrienden en verklaarde vijanden* (Amsterdam: KNAW, 1999), here cited from the English version, 'Amongst Feigned Friends and Declared Enemies', <http://www.oslo2000.uio.no>, 2.

³⁰ For the analysis of traditional Chinese shipping routes in the China Sea and the VOC's attempts to use them, see Leonard Blussé, 'No Boats to China: the Dutch East India Company and the Changing Pattern of the China Sea Trade, 1635-1690', *MAS* 30/1 (1996), 51-76, esp. 20-1.

³¹ Gastra, *The Dutch East India Company*, 57; Van Goor, 'The Dutch East India Company, Merchant and King', 24.

³² A vast historiography has examined the relations between the VOC and the Asian courts, earlier in terms of economic and political, and later increasingly concerning cultural interactions, as well. See, for example, the recent articles in Dutch and English in Elsbeth Locher-Scholten and Peter Rietbergen (eds.), *Hof en handel: Aziatische vorsten en de VOC 1620-1720* (Leiden: KITLV, 2004).

³³ This is the main idea in Leonard Blussé, 'Queen among Kings, Diplomatic Ritual at Batavia', in Kees Grijns and Peter J. M. Nas (eds.), *Jakarta-Batavia* (Leiden: KITLV, 2000), 25-42.

³⁴ Blussé, 'Amongst Feigned Friends', 9. For the European classification of sovereignty of Asian states, see also C. H. Alexandrowicz, *An Introduction to the Law of Nations in the East Indies (16th, 17th, and 18th Centuries)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 15-26.

³⁵ There are several explanations for the demise of the VOC. To sum up, whereas the earlier historiography has seen the eighteenth century as the period of decline for the VOC, the more recent literature suggests instead an alternating picture of internal degradation and recovery or continuity. For this topic, see, for example, Gaastra, *The Dutch East India Company*, 164-70; Els M. Jacobs, *Koopman in Azië: De handel van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie tijdens de 18de eeuw* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2000), 218-21.

³⁶ Peter Rietbergen, 'Varieties of Asia? European Perspectives, c. 1600-c. 1800', *Itinerario*, 3/4 (2001), 69-89, esp. 72-3.

³⁷ Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (2nd ed., Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 22; Furber, *Rival Empires*, 6.

³⁸ Furber asserted that the East India Companies and their servants were perhaps more influential than European travellers and missionaries in laying foundations for the work of the 'Orientalists'. Furber, *Rival Empires*, 325.

³⁹ Rietbergen suggests that to a certain extent the VOC tried to play a role as a 'vector of culture' and offered the demanding literary and influential Dutch public a knowledge of the outside world from its archives. Peter Rietbergen, *Japan verwoord: Nihon door Nederlandse ogen, 1600-1799* (Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing, 2003), 188-9. For the history of the VOC's publishing activities, see John Landwehr, *VOC: A Bibliography of Publications Relating to the Dutch East India Company, 1602-1800*, ed. Peter van der Krogt (Utrecht: HES, 1991), XVII-XXX.

⁴⁰ For instance, in the 1630s, several VOC trade directors were assigned the task of composing a comprehensive account of the circumstances in the places at which they were stationed. Among the results were the famous descriptions of Japan by François Caron, and of Siam by Joost Schouten. The English versions appeared in the double volume *A True Description of the Mighty Kingdoms of Japan and Siam by François Caron and Joost Schouten*, tr. Roger Manley, ed. C. R. Boxer (London: Argonaut Press, 1935).

⁴¹ Nicolaas Witsen, for example, while Burgomaster of Amsterdam and a member of the VOC executive boards made a study of Central Asia. He kept up a correspondence with contemporary European intellectuals, including Leibniz. See Peter Rietbergen, 'Witsen's World: Nicolaas Witsen (1641-1717) between the Dutch East India Company and the Republic of Letters', *Itinerario*, 2 (1985), 121-34.

⁴² For instance, at least twenty-five major descriptions of South Asia, fifteen of mainland South-East Asia, twenty of the South-East Asian Archipelagos, and sixty of East Asia appeared during the seventeenth century. Edwin J. Van Kley, 'Asian Religions in Seventeenth-century Dutch Literature', *Itinerario*, 3/4 (2001), 54-68, esp. 54. For a survey of early modern Dutch, and European, literature on Asia, see Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, I: *The Century of Discovery*, Books 1-2, and II: *A Century of Wonder*, Books 1-3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965, 1970 and 1977); Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, III: *A Century of Advance*, Books 1-4 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

⁴³ Sixteenth-century European literature on Siam agrees that Siam was one of the most affluent and powerful polities in the East and that its ruler was absolute, wealthy, and tolerant of foreigners and their religions. Among the most notable works which were published in that century are Tomé Pires' *Suma Oriental* and Mendez Pinto's *Peregrinação* (the latter had been to Ayutthaya himself). See Donald F. Lach, *Southeast Asia in the Eyes of*

Europe, the Sixteenth Century (repr., Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 519-38.

⁴⁴ Shelly Elisabeth Errington, *Meaning and Power in a Southeast Asian Realm* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 4.

⁴⁵ Thai traditional law reinforced the concept of the arbitrary power of the king. See Frank C. Darling, 'The Evolution of Law in Thailand', *Review of Politics*, 32/2 (1970), 197-218, esp. 200; Sarasin Viraphol, 'Law in Traditional Siam and China: A Comparative Study', *JSS* 65/1 (January 1977), 81-136, esp. 85.

⁴⁶ Dhida Saraya, 'ayutthaya nai thana sunklang amnat kanmuang lae kanpokkrong [Ayutthaya as a Centre of Political and Administrative Power]', in Chatthip Nartsupha et al. (eds.), *sun suksa prawattisat Ayutthaya* [The Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre] (Ayutthaya: Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre, 1990), 55-79, esp. 55-6.

⁴⁷ Robert Heine-Geldern, *Conceptions in State and Kingship in Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, Department of Asian Studies, 1956), 10-11; David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (repr., Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2001), 67-74.

⁴⁸ Errington, *Meaning and Power*, 139.

⁴⁹ Historically Theravada Buddhism provided a king with the legitimacy to rule as the possessor of the highest *karma* (Buddhist concept of accumulated merit), which allowed him to become a *cakravartin* (a universal wheel-turning Buddhist monarch). At the same time, the Ayutthayan King had no problem in identifying himself as a *bodhisattva* (a future Buddha) according to the Mahayana school, while styling himself with titles derived from the Hindu gods. However, the king was obliged by the *thammasat* (the Mon-influenced moral code) to rule with Buddhistic righteousness. For the cultural background of pre-modern Thai kingship, see Dhani Nivat, 'The Old Siamese Conception of the Monarchy', in *Collected Articles by H.H. Prince Dhani Nivat* (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1969), 91-104; see also Sunait Chutintaranond, '*Cakravartin*: the Ideology of Traditional Warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605' (Diss., Cornell University, 1990).

⁵⁰ Dhiravat, 'Crown Trade and Court Politics', 131-2; id., 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 99-100; Busakorn Lailert, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty, 1688-1767: A Study of the Thai Monarchy during the Closing Years of the Ayutthya Period' (Diss., University of London, 1972), 167-8, 176.

⁵¹ Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 221.

⁵² Wyatt, *Thailand*, 107.

⁵³ Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 192; Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 299-302.

⁵⁴ Wyatt, 'King Borommakorn', 54.

⁵⁵ Errington, *Meaning and Power*, 9-10.

⁵⁶ Kemp, *Aspects of Siamese Kingship*, 10.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Lorraine Gesick, 'The Rise and Fall of King Taksin: A Drama of Buddhist Kingship', in id. (ed.) *Centers, Symbols, and Hierarchies: Essays on the Classical States of Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1983), 87-105, esp. 88-9. In practice, a person cannot know whether or not his *karma* is to be exhausted. Therefore, a king was always in implicit competition with potential rivals who might claim to have equal or greater merit.

⁵⁹ H. G. Quaritch Wales, *Ancient Siamese Government and Administration* (repr., New York: Paragon Book Reprint, 1965), 16; Akin Rabibhadana, *The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period, 1782-1873* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969), 40. Prince Dhani Nivat and Busakorn have emphasized that Buddhism was more influential in shaping Ayutthayan kingship than the Hindu cult of divinity which was used to bestow outward dignity. Dhani Nivat, 'The Old Siamese Conception', 101; Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 122-44.

⁶⁰ The VOC trade director, Jeremias van Vliet wrote that in their own provinces the governors were treated like a king and that King Prasatthong kept his officials poor so as to prevent them from revolting against him. Jeremias van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', in id., *Van Vliet's Siam*, ed. Chris Baker et al. (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005), 145-8. The

VOC surgeon Engelbert Kaempfer, who visited Ayutthaya in 1690, was less than impressed by the dirty and rather less than well-appointed hall and residence of the *Phrakhlung*. Engelbert Kaempfer, *A Description of the Kingdom of Siam 1690* (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 1998), 26. (Originally published in English in 1727.) On the other hand, the French priest Nicolas Gervaise observed that the prominent officials spared nothing to build temples the one more magnificent than the other. Nicolas Gervaise, *The Natural and Political History of the Kingdom of Siam*, tr. and ed. John Villiers (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1998), 139.

⁶¹ For a short analysis of the link between the display of wealth and power in early modern South-East Asia, see J. Kathirithamby-Wells, 'Forms and Concepts of Courtly Wealth in Seventeenth Century Aceh, Ayutthaya and Banten', in *Sarjana, Special Issue* (1994), 57-69. In traditional Thai society, which was obsessed with social hierarchy and social status, acts of public generosity and gift-giving were used to demonstrate the king's power (to give) and so confirm his position. A. Brand, 'Merit, Hierarchy and Royal Gift-giving in Traditional Thai Society', *BKI* 131/1 (1975), 111-37, esp. 135-6. For the use of textiles to service court protocol and patronage, see John Guy, *Woven Cargoes: Indian Textiles in the East* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 121-51.

⁶² For the topic of wealth display by the nobility in Late Ayutthaya, see Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, 296-7.

⁶³ The previous historiography of the early development of Ayutthaya has stated that the kingdom had first risen as a hinterland state and later became active in maritime trade. Recently, Chris Baker has argued the opposite, using in particular early Chinese accounts of the polity, stating that Ayutthaya had been first a maritime power focusing on controlling trade routes and supply sources, and only afterwards became a territorial power. Chris Baker, 'Ayutthaya Rising: From Land or Sea?', *JSEAS* 34/1 (February 2003), 41-62.

⁶⁴ Theoretically, the *corvée* system required 'all freemen' to render labour 'six months a year' to the State. The manpower was used in the king's service, constructing and maintaining public works and engaging in military campaigns, and was distributed for the use of the *krom* of the *chao* and *khunnang*. However, recent research has questioned the portrayal of a static *rabop phrai* by the previous study. See Junko Koizumi, 'King's Manpower Constructed: Writing the History of the Conscription of Labour in Siam', *SEAR* 10/1 (2002), 31-61.

⁶⁵ For 'port-polity' as a historical category of South-East Asia, see J. Kathirithamby-Wells, 'Introduction: An Overview', in J. Kathirithamby-Wells and John Villiers (eds.), *The Southeast Asian Port and Polity: Rise and Demise* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990), 1-16.

⁶⁶ Wyatt, *Thailand*, 86-7.

⁶⁷ Kathirithamby-Wells, 'Forms and Concepts of Courtly Wealth', 57. This claim and Lieberman's argument based on demographic and domestic commercial growth champion the role of local agency in the commercial expansion of Ayutthaya and South-East Asia, which is often seen as a result of external demand. Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, 296.

⁶⁸ Kathirithamby-Wells, 'Introduction', 5.

⁶⁹ For a survey of the trade of Siam with Asian partners, see Kennon Breazeale, 'Thai Maritime Trade and the Ministry Responsible', in id. (ed.), *From Japan to Arabia: Ayutthaya's Maritime Relations with Asia* (Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 1999), 23-45.

⁷⁰ A part of the Three Seals Laws (*Kot Mai Tra Sam Duang*)—the Law of Civil Hierarchy (probably of 1466)—outlines the basic organization of the *Phrakhlung Sinka*. For a survey of this ministry, see Breazeale, 'Thai Maritime Trade', 5-15.

⁷¹ Saichon Wannarat has suggested that the eighteenth-century ruling class became more bourgeois, materialistic, consumerist, imbued with empirical views and a mercantilist mind, as a result of its increasing participation in trade. Saichon Wannarat, 'setthakit lae sangkom thai nai samai plai ayutthaya [Thai Economy and Society in the Late Ayutthaya Period]', *warasan thammasat* [Journal of Thammasat University], 11/3 (September 1982), 6-27.

⁷² Abraham Bogaert, *Historische reizen door d'oostersche deelen van Asia: mitsg. van omstandig verhaal van de Bantamschen inlanschen oorlog, het driven der Franciozen uit het*

koninkryk Siam, en 't geen aan kaap de goede hoop in den jaare 1706 is voorgevallen tot aan het opontbod des gouverneurs W. A. van der Stel (Amsterdam: Ten Hoorn, 1711); François Valentyn, *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indiën*, III: B (Dordrecht: Joannes van Braam/Amsterdam: Gerard Onder de Linden, 1726). Both works bear a resemblance to other accounts written in the seventeenth century. Valentyn referred to his sources as being, for example Van Vliet and the French diplomats Alexandre de Chaumont and Simon de La Loubère. Bogaert, who claimed to have been to Siam in 1690, did not mention any source, but his account tends to lack originality for it does not, or not explicitly, reflect what could have been occurrences contemporaneous with his stay.

⁷³ For information on the archives of the VOC, see M. A. P. Meilink-Roelofs, R. Raben and H. Spijkerman (eds.), *De archieven van de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie/The Archives of the Dutch East India Company, 1602-1795* (The Hague: Sdu Uitgeverij, 1992).

Notes to Chapter One

¹ Schouten's work first appeared as *Notitie vande situatie, regeeringe, macht, religie, costuymen, traffijcgen ende andere remarquable saecken des Coninghrijcks Siam* (s-Gravenhage: Aert Meuris, 1638). Its English version was published in the double volume *François Caron and Joost Schouten: A True Description of the Mighty Kingdoms of Japan and Siam*, tr. Roger Manley (London, 1663). A new edition of Manley's translation was edited with commentary by C. R. Boxer in 1935. All references are from Boxer's edition. (Hereafter: Schouten, 'Description of Siam'.)

² Jeremias van Vliet, *Beschryving van het koningryk Siam. Mitsgaders het verhaal van den oorsprong, onderscheyd, politijke regering, d'ecclesiastieke en costuymelijke huyshoudinge van d'Edelen en Borgerlijke Liedén: als mede den loop der Negotie, en andere remarquable saaken des Koningrijcks Siam* (Leiden: Frederik Haaring, 1692). English version by L. F. van Ravenswaay, 'Translation of Jeremias van Vliet's Description of the Kingdom of Siam', *JSS* 7 (1910), 1-108. It has been republished in Van Vliet, *Van Vliet's Siam*. All references are from this edition. (Hereafter: Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam'.)

³ Cornelis van Nijenrode, 'Remonstrantie en verthoninge der gelegentheyt des coninckrijx van Siam mitsgaders haeren handel ende wandel ende waar de negotie meest in bestaet etc.', *Kroniek van het Historisch Genootschap Gevestigd te Utrecht*, 10 (1854), 176-91. (Hereafter: Van Nijenrode, 'Remonstrantie'.)

⁴ VOC 1125, Dagregister Jeremias van Vliet, 11 July 1637, fos. 621^r-623^r. Previously in 1633, King Prasatthong had asked the Dutch to submit the names of all the cities and villages in the Dutch Republic. VOC 1113, Cort verhael over de vojagie naer Jambij ende Chijam alsmede van de overleveringe der missive ende gesonden schenckkagie van den prince van Orangien aen den coninck van Chijam in den jaere 1633 binnen de conincklijke hoofdstadt Judia, wel ende behoorlijck geffectueert door den commandeur Jan Joosten de Roij [Short story of the voyage to Jambi and Siam and of the presentation of the letter and gifts from the Prince of Orange to the King of Siam in the year 1633 in the royal capital Ayutthaya, well and properly performed by the commander Jan Joosten de Roij], Jan Joosten de Roij, 30 Sept. 1633, fo. 456^r.

⁵ Chris Baker has recently suggested reading Van Vliet's 'Description of Siam' as a proposal for Dutch colonization of the kingdom. Whether it really was what Van Vliet had in mind, the VOC obviously had no intention of conquering Siam. Baker, 'Introduction' [to Van Vliet's Description of the Kingdom of Siam], in Van Vliet, *Van Vliet's Siam*, 91-8, esp. 97-8.

⁶ Smith, *The Dutch*, 111.

⁷ For the VOC's tin trade at Ligor, see Supaporn Ariyasajskul, 'De VOC in Ligor: met nadruk op de tinhandel, 1640-1756' (MA thesis, Leiden University, 1999).

⁸ Smith, *The Dutch*, 110.

⁹ Dhiravat, 'Crown Trade and Court Politics', 133.

¹⁰ Dhiravat, 'The Dutch-Siamese Conflict', 292.

¹¹ J. J. L. Duyvendak, 'The First Siamese Embassy to Holland', *T'oung Pao*, 32 (1936), 285-92, esp. 288-9; H. Terpstra, *De factorij der Oostindische Compagnie te Patani* (The

Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1938), 21-2; Smith, *The Dutch*, 11.

¹² Smith, *The Dutch*, 8-9; Dhiravat, 'Shift to Isolation?', 250.

¹³ Blussé, 'No Boats to China', 61.

¹⁴ For the exports of Siamese rice and other provisions by the VOC in the seventeenth century, see Smith, *The Dutch*, 82-4.

¹⁵ For the VOC's imports into Siam in the seventeenth century, see *ibid.* 90-4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 58-65.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 61.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 67; Supaporn, 'De VOC in Ligor', 13-21. The VOC had started its tin trade in the Malay Peninsula in the 1630s, but it was able to expand it significantly after the Dutch conquest of Portuguese Malacca, which was also a redistribution centre of this product. Since 1607, the Company had been in contact with the ruler of Ligor, but its interest was in pepper. In 1636, King Prasatthong succeeded in suppressing the insurrections among the vassal states of Ayutthaya in the south; as a result, the Kingdom of Ligor was divided into a number of lesser provinces which answered directly to Ayutthaya.

¹⁹ Smith, *The Dutch*, 110.

²⁰ Breazeale, 'Thai Maritime Trade', 9.

²¹ VOC 1206, Missive Volkerus Westerwolt to Governor-General and Council of the Indies (hereafter: to Batavia), 28 Oct. 1654, fos. 2^r-11^v, 16^v-17^r.

²² Dhiravat, 'Crown Trade and Court Politics', 139.

²³ Smith, *The Dutch*, 37-9; Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 292, 298.

²⁴ VOC 1240, Rapport [Report] Jan van Rijck, 3 Nov. 1662, fo. 1493^v; Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 297-9.

²⁵ The original Dutch text of the 1664 Treaty is in *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum*, 6 vols., ed. J. E. Heeres and F. W. Stapel (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1907-1955), II, 280-5. (Hereafter: *Corpus Diplomaticum*.) The English translation of 1886 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Siam has been published in Smith, *The Dutch*, 138-41.

²⁶ Dhiravat, 'The Dutch-Siamese Conflict', 300-1, 304.

²⁷ Smith, *The Dutch*, 35-43; Dhiravat, 'The Dutch-Siamese Conflict', 304, 305-6; Dhiravat, 'Crown Trade and Court Politics', 137.

²⁸ For the tensions building up to Siam's declaration of war on England/the EIC, see Hutchinson, *Adventurer in Siam*, 123-52.

²⁹ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 339-43, 373-4, 410-16, 429.

³⁰ Dhiravat, 'Shift to Isolation', 44-5.

³¹ Remco Raben, 'Ayutthaya, King Phetracha and the World', paper given at the Seminar *Crossroads of Thai and Dutch History*, National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, 9-11 Sept. 2004, 10.

³² *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, 11 vols., ed. W. P. Coolhaas, J. van Goor and J. E. Schooneveld-Oosterling ('s-Gravenhage: Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën, 1960-2004), VII: 1713-1725, 15 Jan. 1716, 204-5; 19 Feb. 1716, 219 (hereafter: *Generale missiven*); Raben and Dhiravat, 'Tipping Balances', 64.

³³ Raben and Dhiravat, 'Tipping Balances', 65, 71. The original Dutch text of the 1709 Treaty appears in *Corpus Diplomaticum*, IV, 273-5.

³⁴ VOC 2219, Consideration van Wijbrand Blom over de presenten staat van den handel, en verdere toestand der saken, aan de comptoir tot Siam en Ligor [Considerations by Wijbrand Blom on the present state of trade and the state of affairs, to the office[s] in Siam and Ligor], Wijbrand Blom, 25 Mar. 1733, fos. 191-362; VOC 2383, Missive Theodorus van den Heuvel to Batavia, 25 Jan. 1736, fos. 40-2 (also referring to Blom's advice); VOC 2868, Beschrijvingen van Macassar en Siam [Descriptions of Makassar and Siam], Adriaan de Nijs, December 1756, fos. 795-808; VOC 3152, Missive Abraham Werndlij to Batavia, 18 Dec. 1765, fos. 14-15. See also Raben and Dhiravat, 'Tipping Balances', 66, 75.

³⁵ VOC 2193, Missive Rogier van Alderwereld and Pieter Sijen to Batavia, 19 Dec. 1731, fos. 20-1.

³⁶ Jennifer Wayne Cushman, *Fields from the Sea: Chinese Junk Trade with Siam during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (2nd ed., Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast

Asia Program, 2000), 128-9.

³⁷ Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'Princes, Pretenders and the Chinese Phrakhläng', 115-20. The Chinese also became quickly rooted in the provincial bureaucracy in such places as Ligor.

³⁸ Raben and Dhiravat, 'Tipping Balances', 66.

³⁹ Ibid. 65, 69.

⁴⁰ VOC 2718, Missive Gerrit Fek and Nicolaas Bang to Batavia, 28 Dec. 1747, fo. 39; *Generale missiven*, XI: 1743-1750, 29 Sept. 1747, 483-5; 31 Dec. 1747, 520. The VOC reported that four French warships helped fight the English and Portuguese pirates off Tenasserim in 1712, and subsequently their commander was rewarded by King Thaisa. In 1723, the French Director in Canton sent a ship with Chinese goods to Ayutthaya but had no success, according to the Dutch. VOC 1841, Missive Dirk Blom and Willem de Bevere to Batavia, 4 Jan. 1713, fos. 1-2; VOC 1996, Missive Van Alderwereld to Batavia, 20 Jan. 1723, fos. 17-18.

⁴¹ Anderson, *English Intercourse*, 389-90.

⁴² VOC 1743, Missive Aarnout Cleur to Batavia, 22 Oct. 1706, fo. 33. In 1733, an embassy from the English Governor of Bengal arrived in Ayutthaya and failed to achieve anything. To make matters worse, opium—contraband in Siam—was found in the ambassador's ship. VOC 2286, Missive Sijen to Batavia, 30 Nov. 1733, fos. 43-5.

⁴³ VOC 3089, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 28 Jan. 1763, fo. 8; VOC 3152, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 28 Dec. 1764, fos. 19-21.

⁴⁴ The original Dutch text of the 1754 Treaty appears in *Corpus Diplomaticum*, VI, 20-2.

⁴⁵ In the eighteenth century, Banka in Sumatra became the most important source for tin for the VOC. See Gaastra, *The Dutch East India Company*, 124-6.

⁴⁶ VOC 3024, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 4 Dec. 1761, fos. 7-8.

⁴⁷ VOC 3125, *Generale missive*, 20 Oct. 1765, fos. 50^v-56^v.

⁴⁸ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 128; Antonio da Silva Rego, 'A Short Survey of Luso-Siamese Relations from 1511 to Modern Times', in the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (ed.), *Thailand and Portugal: 476 Years of Friendship* (2nd ed., Bangkok: The Embassy of Portugal, 1987), 7-25, esp. 10.

⁴⁹ VOC 1075, Translaet van de missive van den coninck van Siam aen den gouverneur generaal [Translation of a letter [of the *Phrakhläng* in the name of] the King of Siam to the Governor-General], 5 Jan. 1622, fos. 218-9.

⁵⁰ Van Nijenrode, 'Remonstrantie', 8.

⁵¹ Schouten, 'Description of Siam', 101-2; Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 122-4.

⁵² Smith, *The Dutch*, 112.

⁵³ Ibid. 18-20.

⁵⁴ VOC 1157, *Journaelse aenteekening* [Journal note] Reinier van Tzum, 17 May 1644, fo. 668^r.

⁵⁵ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 228-30.

⁵⁶ Smith, *The Dutch*, 29.

⁵⁷ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 338.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 233-4.

⁵⁹ In 1650, Van Goens, later Governor-General of the Indies (1678-81), was sent to Ayutthaya to investigate the financial problems which the former *Opperhoofd* Jan van Muijden (1646-50) had left behind and to take temporary charge of the office. He also presented the letters and gifts from Batavia to King Prasatthong and the *Phrakhläng*. Alfons van der Kraan, 'On Company Business: The Rijckloff van Goens Mission to Siam, 1650', *Itinerario*, 22/2 (1998), 42-84, esp. 74-5.

⁶⁰ VOC 1407, *Memorie van Faa zaliger aan Keijts* [Memorandum left by the late Faa to Keijts], 15 Jan. 1685, fo. 3215^{r-v}. Actually, Zheng Jing, the grandson and successor of Zheng Chenggong, had already been defeated in 1683.

⁶¹ For the tensions between the VOC and Siam concerning the Malay states during the 1680s, see Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 367-71.

⁶² Dhiravat, 'The Dutch-Siamese Conflict', 305.

⁶³ Van Goor also points out that, occasionally, China did send out low-ranking envoys,

or 'messengers of an imperial edict', with limited liberty to negotiate, and that Safavid Iran a few times sent envoys to Europe to seek support against the Ottoman Empire. Jurrien van Goor, 'Merchants as Diplomats: Embassies as an Illustration of European-Asian Relations', in id., *Prelude to Colonialism*, 27-47, esp. 45-7.

⁶⁴ Anthony Reid, 'Documenting the Rise and Fall of Ayudhaya as a Regional Trade Centre', in id., *Charting the Shape of Early Modern Southeast Asia* (Chiang Mai: Silksworm Books, 1999), 85-99, esp. 94.

⁶⁵ For a detailed study of this topic, see Suebsaeng Promboon, 'Sino-Siamese Tributary Relations, 1282-1853' (Diss., University of Wisconsin, 1971).

⁶⁶ It should be remembered that Ayutthaya often had a 'shared sovereignty' over its vassal with a third party. For instance, Cambodia accepted the overlordship of both Siam and Vietnam. The Malay tributaries of Siam often sought help from the Dutch. Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation* (2nd ed., Chiang Mai: Silksworm Books, 1998), 85-8.

⁶⁷ Dhiravat, *Siamese Court Life*, 109.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 123-4.

⁶⁹ According to Van Vliet, Siam always treated Aceh as an equal power. Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 134.

⁷⁰ Reid, *Age of Commerce*, II, 234-5.

⁷¹ The first Siamese embassy to the Dutch Republic has been presented in Paul Pelliot, 'Les relations du Siam et de la Hollande en 1608', *T'oung Pao*, 32 (1936), 223-9; Duyvendak, 'The First Siamese Embassy to Holland'.

⁷² Since the seven Dutch provinces declared their independence from Spain in 1581, the Stadholders were 'appointed' by the States of the provinces and no longer by the Spanish King. Only in 1747 did the office become 'hereditary' but it was abolished in 1795 as a result of the French occupation.

⁷³ Rita Wassing-Visser, *Royal Gifts from Indonesia: Historical Bonds with the House Orange-Nassau, 1600-1938* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1995), 'Chapter 1: The Republic of the Seven United Netherlands', 22-51, esp. 28, 30.

⁷⁴ Van Goor, 'Merchants as Diplomats', 32.

⁷⁵ M. S. Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy, 1450-1919* (London/New York: Longman, 1993), 60-1.

⁷⁶ Van Goor, 'Merchants as Diplomats', 38, 40.

⁷⁷ For example, King Phetracha asked for Dutch naval protection for Siamese junks in the Indian Ocean after one of his junks had been robbed by the English on its return journey from Masulipatam. His successor, King Süa, made the same request. VOC 1623, Missive Gideon Tant to Batavia, 1698-9, fos. 59-60; Translation of a Missive *Phrakhleng* to Batavia, 6 Mar. 1699, fos. 56-60.

⁷⁸ VOC 2193, Dagregister Van Alderwereld, 3 June 1730, fo. 31; Translaet missive van het Siam hof [Translation of a letter from the Siamese court], fos. 73-5.

⁷⁹ VOC 2438, Missive Van den Heuvel to Batavia, 25 Jan. 1738, fos. 20-1.

⁸⁰ VOC 1868, Missive D. Blom to Batavia, 14 May 1715, fos. 40-5.

Notes to Chapter Two

¹ See, for example, the instructions for the VOC employees of 1607 and 1617, in Pieter van Dam, *Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*, ed. F. W. Stapel (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1927), I, 584-601. These instructions gave direction to the trade directors and assistants about how to administer such Company affairs as record- and bookkeeping, handling the VOC ships, and disciplining subordinates on the spot. The 1607 order was especially concerned with the behaviour of employees; for instance, it prohibited private trade, conversion to Asian religions, maintaining a luxurious life-style, and courtship with local women. The first and the last were difficult to prevent.

² For the ranks, titles, and insignia which the Dutch *Opperhoofd* usually received, see Smith, *The Dutch*, 106.

³ The *Kotmai Tra Sam Duang* were compiled and revised, on the basis of the surviving

laws of Ayutthaya, in 1805 at the behest of the founder of the Chakri Dynasty, King Rama I (r. 1782-1809).

⁴ *Corpus Diplomaticum*, II, 280-5; Smith, *The Dutch*, 138-41 (English translation).

⁵ VOC 1945, Memorie door Blom aan zijn vervanger ter naricht gelaten [Instruction by (Wijbrand) Blom to his successor], 22 Dec. 1720, 30-92.

⁶ Schouten, 'Description of Siam', 100; Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 112, 153-4.

⁷ Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 164-5. Van Vliet's assertion that one-third of the inheritance went to the King was supported by Choisy, while Heecq emphasized the King's absolute power on matters concerning his subject's estates. Abbé de Choisy, *Journal of a Voyage to Siam 1685-1686*, tr. Michael Smithies (Kuala Lumpur, 1993), 190 (originally published in 1687); Gijsbert Heecq, 'Derde Voijagie van Gijsbert Heecq Naer Oost Indijen', ed. S. P. l'Honoré Naber, *Marineblad*, 25 (1910-11), 422-50, esp. 434.

⁸ VOC 1194, Missive Westerwolt to Batavia, 22 Oct. 1652, fo. 244^r.

⁹ Schouten, 'Description of Siam', 100-1; see also Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 154. A person could prove his innocence by swallowing this charmed rice ball without spitting it out.

¹⁰ Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 107; Nicholas Gervaise, *The Natural and Political History of the Kingdom of Siam*, tr. and ed. John Villiers (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1998), 61. (Originally published in 1688.)

¹¹ These texts reflect the dominating concerns of Dutch law in Asia with such issues as inheritance, municipal order, control of trade, and private property. For detailed comments on the *Statutes of Batavia*, see Peter Burns, 'The Netherlands East Indies: Colonial Legal Policy and the Definitions of Law', in Hooker, M. B. (ed.), *Laus of South-East Asia*, II: *European Laws in South-East Asia* (Singapore: Butterworth, 1986), 148-298, esp. 195.

¹² For an overview of these Thai codes of law, see Yoneo Ishii, 'The Thai Thammasat (with a Note on the Lao Thammasat)', in Hooker, M. B. (ed.), *Laws of South-East Asia*, I: *The Pre-Modern Texts* (Singapore: Butterworth, 1986), 143-203. Ishii divides the content of traditional Thai law into public law and private law. The former includes the Preamble (*Phrathammasat*) which explains the authority of the law text; the king, bureaucracy, and administration; public order with emphasis on types of crime and punishment; and judicial process. The latter consisted of the legal categories of people; marriage and divorce; property; and obligations (damage caused to person or property; contract).

¹³ Remco Raben, 'Batavia and Colombo: the Ethnic and Spatial Order of Two Colonial Cities' (Diss., Leiden University, 1996), 197.

¹⁴ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 210-12.

¹⁵ Han ten Brummelhuis and John Kleinen, *A Dutch Picnic in Ayutthaya, 1636* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 1984).

¹⁶ Van Vliet's manuscript in the form of a diary was first published as *Verbael ende Historisch verhael van 't gene den Vereenighde Oost-Indische Compagnies Dienaers, onder de directie van Jeremias van Vliet, in de Jaren 1636 ende 1637 bij den Koninck van Siam, in the Stadt Judia, wedervaren is. Vervatende de Absolute regeeringe ende strenge wetten der Siammers* [Report and Historical Account of the Events which Befell the Servants of the United Netherlands Chartered East India Company, under the direction of Jeremias van Vliet in the City of Ayutthaya, in the Kingdom of Siam, in the Years 1636 and 1637. Containing an Account of the Absolute Government and Severe Laws of the Siamese] (Amsterdam: Jan Jansz, 1647). It has been translated into English as 'Diary of the Picnic Incident, 1636-7' with an introduction by Alfons van der Kraan, in Van Vliet, *Van Vliet's Siam*, 37-88. [Hereafter: Van Vliet, 'Diary of the Picnic Incident'.]

¹⁷ Van Vliet, 'Diary of the Picnic Incident', 52-3; id., 'Description of Siam', 112.

¹⁸ Ten Brummelhuis and Kleinen, *A Dutch Picnic in Ayutthaya*, 14.

¹⁹ Van der Kraan, 'Introduction [to 'Diary of the Picnic Incident']', in Van Vliet, *Van Vliet's Siam*, 38-9.

²⁰ Van Vliet, 'Diary of the Picnic Incident', 86-8.

²¹ For the text of this declaration, see Van Vliet, 'Diary of the Picnic Incident', 84. It is incorporated as 'Copie van de acte door den Siamschen coninck den coopman Jeremias van Vliet afgedrongen te passeren ende nae te coomen, 30 september [sic] 1636' [Engelse vertaling], in *Corpus Diplomaticum*, I, 284-5.

²² Robert Lingat, 'La condition des étrangers au Siam au XVII^e siècle', in John Gilissen (ed.), *Recueils de la Société Jean Bodin*, IX: *L'étranger* (Bruxelles: Editions de la librairie encyclopédique, 1958), 255-66, 262; Smith, *The Dutch*, 38; Ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat*, 38.

The extraterritoriality or the practice of the capitulation of certain rights to foreign subjects began in the eleventh and twelfth centuries when the northern Italian states acquired such a privilege for their subjects in the Levant. The Ottoman rulers extended the same concession to the subjects of the European powers in their realm, for example, to France in 1535 and to England in 1583. In 1612, the Dutch managed to secure the extraterritorial right in the Ottoman Empire. Despite the lack of reciprocity, the treaties of capitulation concluded in this period did not signify any Dutch and European dominance over the Turks. In return, the Ottoman Government expected, for example, from the English an active contribution towards the imperial army and navy. The capitulation was meant to be the foundation of the Dutch presence in the Empire and the Dutch collaboration against Spain.

²³ 'The Dutch-Thai Treaty of 1664', in Smith, *The Dutch*, 139.

²⁴ VOC 1415, Missive Johannes Keijts to Batavia, 17 Dec. 1685, fos. 896^r-897^v. See also Chapter Five, 133-4.

²⁵ For the text of the Franco-Siamese Treaty of 10 December 1685, see L. de Reinach, *Recueil des traités conclus par la France en Extrême-Orient*, I: 1684-1902 (Paris: Leroux, 1902), 4-6; see also Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West*, 346-7.

²⁶ For the text of the Franco-Siamese Treaty of 11 December 1687, see Reinach, *Recueil des traités*, I, 8-13. Lingat regards this as a remarkable suggestion from the French side, an anticipation of the International Court. See Lingat, 'La condition des étrangers au Siam', 261-2.

²⁷ VOC 2193, Transport gedaen door het opperhoofd Rogier van Alderwereld aen zijn vervanger Pieter Sijen, 1731, fos. 203-6.

²⁸ Kees Zandvliet, 'Vestingbouw in de Oost', in Gerrit Knaap and Ger Teitler (eds.), *De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie tussen oorlog en diplomatie* (Leiden: KITLV, 2002), 151-80, esp. 167-70.

²⁹ Smith, *The Dutch*, 101; VOC 1118, Dagregister Schouten, 10 July 1634, fo. 75^r; Missive Schouten to Batavia, 15 Nov. 1634, fo. 48^v; VOC 3089, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 31 Dec. 1763, fos. 12-14. Werndlij wrote that the isle remained dry, even when the neighbourhood stood three to four feet under water.

³⁰ Heecq, 'Derde Voijagie', 439-42.

³¹ Smith, *The Dutch*, 5.

³² VOC 1118, Dagregister Schouten, 10 July 1634, fo. 75^r.

³³ Heecq, 'Derde Voijagie', 439 (this English translation is from Ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat*, 25); Gervaise, *The Natural and Political History of the Kingdom of Siam*, 48.

³⁴ VOC 1119, Dagregister Van Vliet, 6 Apr. 1636, fo. 1340^r.

³⁵ VOC 2239, Dagregister Sijen, 18 July 1732, fo. 60. For a report about the VOC's participation in the attempts to cure King Thaisa's cancer, see Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'The Last Year of King Thaisa's Reign: Data Concerning Politics and Society from the Dutch East India Company's Siam Factory *Dagregister* for 1732', in Winai Pongsripian (ed.), *khwam yokyon khong adeet/The Wilderness of the Past* (Bangkok, 1994), 125-45.

³⁶ Van der Kraan, 'The Rijckloff van Goens Mission to Siam', 68.

³⁷ VOC 1596, Missive Thomas van Son to Batavia, 8 Dec. 1697, fo. 57.

³⁸ VOC 1440, Missive Joannes Keijts to Batavia, 23 Nov. 1687, fo. 2256^{r-v}.

³⁹ Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'VOC Participation in Siamese Society during the Late Ayutthaya Period, 1688-1767', in id., *Court, Company, and Campong: Essays on the VOC Presence in Ayutthaya* (Ayutthaya: Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre, 1992), 44-62, esp. 46.

⁴⁰ Heecq, 'Derde Voijagie', 446. For example, the VOC used the local Portuguese to go upcountry—where the Dutch were not allowed to visit—to buy goods, for example deer-skins. VOC 1119, Dagregister Schouten, 19 Sept. 1636, fo. 1303.

⁴¹ Smith, *The Dutch*, 101.

⁴² In order to keep peace with the host society and to save unnecessary costs, the VOC supported the missionary activity of the Dutch Reformed Church only to a limited extent. Clerics were appointed to reside and serve in major Dutch settlements, especially Batavia, and to convert the Asians who had been Roman Catholics as a result of earlier contact with the Portuguese, in particular in Ceylon and Ambon. An itinerant minister might visit other Dutch settlements in Asia only once in several years.

⁴³ VOC 1458, Dagregister Pieter van den Hoorn, 5 Mar. 1689, fo. 501^r.

⁴⁴ VOC 2193, Dagregister Van Alderwereld, 20 & 21 Nov. 1730, fos. 47-8; Dhiravat, 'VOC Participation in Siamese Society', 49. About René Charbonneau, see Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'Towards a History of Seventeenth-Century Phuket', in Sunait Chutintaranond and Chris Baker (eds.), *Recalling the Pasts: Autonomous History in Southeast Asia* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2002), 89-126, esp. 120-1.

⁴⁵ VOC 2286, Originele resolutie op 11 April 1732 rakende het huwelijk van de Barquir Paulus Scheper en de jonge dochter Maria Wens [Resolution concerning the marriage of Paulus Scheeper and Maria Wens], fo. 92.

⁴⁶ Smith, *The Dutch*, 111.

⁴⁷ VOC 1945, Memorie W. Blom, 22 Dec. 1720, fo. 68.

⁴⁸ Ibid., fo. 69.

⁴⁹ Ibid., fo. 73.

⁵⁰ Ibid., fos. 72-3; see also Reid, *Age of Commerce*, II, 90-3.

⁵¹ VOC 1945, Memorie W. Blom, 22 Dec. 1720, fo. 69.

⁵² Ibid., fos. 70-1.

⁵³ Ibid., fo. 75.

⁵⁴ Ibid., fo. 75.

⁵⁵ Ibid., fo. 69.

⁵⁶ Ibid., fos. 75-6.

⁵⁷ VOC 1458, Dagregister Van den Hoorn, 19 Jan. 1689, fo. 465^r.

⁵⁸ VOC 2239, Dagregister Sijen, 5 May 1732, fo. 39.

⁵⁹ 'The Dutch-Thai Treaty of 1664', in Smith, *The Dutch*, 139.

⁶⁰ VOC 1945, Memorie W. Blom, 22 Dec. 1720, fo. 69.

⁶¹ VOC 2051, Memorie van overgave van Cock aan Isaac Kleeman voor het Ligor-comptoir [Instruction by (Imel) Cock to Isaac Kleeman regarding the Ligor office], 24 Sept. 1726, fo. 79.

⁶² VOC 1945, Memorie W. Blom, 22 Dec. 1720, fo. 70.

⁶³ The case of the murder of De Vries is presented in Dhiravat, 'VOC Participation in Siamese Society', 57. VOC 1841, Missive Dirck Blom to Batavia, 15 Dec. 1713, fos. 29-30; Translaet vonnis van de Siamse Coning over de moordenaars van de matroos Jodocus de Vries [Translation of the verdict of the Siamese King on the murderers of the sailor Jodocus de Vries], 5 Feb. 1713, fos. 38-41.

⁶⁴ For instance, as early as 1621 Van Nijenrode had written that everyone had to step outside their houses to lie prostrate and pay homage to the King's procession, and whoever failed to do so incurred heavy punishment, even death. Van Nijenrode, 'Remonstrantie', 181.

⁶⁵ VOC 1945, Memorie W. Blom, 22 Dec. 1720, fos. 91-2.

⁶⁶ VOC 1458, Dagregister Van den Hoorn, 19 Jan. 1689, fo. 467^{r-v}.

⁶⁷ Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'Ayutthaya as a Cosmopolitan Society: A Case Study of Daniel Brochebourde and His Descendants', in id., *Court, Company, and Campong*, 25-43, esp. 37; Ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat*, 47.

⁶⁸ VOC 2193, Dagregister Van Alderwereld, 30 Nov.-3 Dec. 1731, fos. 180-3.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 25 & 26 June 1731, fos. 154-5.

⁷⁰ Reid, *Age of Commerce*, II, 71.

⁷¹ Dhiravat, 'Ayutthaya as a Cosmopolitan Society', 35-6.

⁷² Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'VOC Employees and their Relationships with Mon and Siamese Women: A Case Study of Osoet Pegua', in Barbara Watson Andaya (ed.), *Other Pasts: Women, Gender and History in Early Modern Southeast Asia* (Hawaii: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), 195-214, esp. 209-11.

⁷³ Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia*

(Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 43, 76.

⁷⁴ VOC 1456, Rapport Keijts, 14 Feb. 1689, fo. 2012^v.

⁷⁵ For example, VOC 1139, Journaelsche aenteeckeninge van den commissaris Jeremias van Vliet [Journal notes of Commissioner Jeremias van Vliet], 1 Nov. 1641, fo. 776^v; VOC 1362, Missive Faa to Batavia, 26 Dec. 1680, fo. 956^v.

⁷⁶ Dhiravat, 'VOC Employees and their Relationships with Mon and Siamese Women', 206-7.

⁷⁷ Dhiravat, 'Daniel Brochebourde and his Descendants', 35.

⁷⁸ Dhiravat, 'VOC Participation in Siamese Society', 54-6.

⁷⁹ Ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat*, 55.

⁸⁰ Smith, *The Dutch*, 102.

⁸¹ Ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat*, 65-70.

Notes to Chapter Three

¹ Van Nijenrode, 'Remonstrantie', 178. All English quotations are from the translation by Han ten Brummelhuis (forthcoming, Silkworm Books) which is based on the manuscript kept at Het Utrechts Archief, Archief Hiltten. Van Nijenrode served in Ayutthaya in 1611-12 and as the director there in 1617-21. For biographical details, see Leonard Blussé, *Bitter Bonds: A Colonial Divorce Drama of the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2002), 29-34.

² Van Nijenrode, 'Remonstrantie', 181, 188. The part 'whether English, Portuguese or Moors' which appears in the manuscript was left out of the 1854 publication.

³ In the seventeenth century, it was repeatedly reprinted in Dutch, and translated into German, French, English, Latin, and Swedish. For bibliographical details, see Smith, *The Dutch*, 188; and Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, III: 1174. For Schouten's biography, see *Generale missiven* I: 1610-1638, 370 n. 4; Boxer, *A True Description*, 139-43; and Leonard Blussé, 'Justus Schouten en de Japanse gijzeling', in *Nederlandse Historische Bronnen*, Nederlands Historisch Genootschap, 5 (Amsterdam: Verloren, 1984), 69-74.

⁴ Van Vliet composed his first account 'Description of Siam' in 1638 (first published in 1692). In February 1640, he produced the second account *Cort Verhael van 't naturel eijnde der volbrachter tijt ende successie der Coningen van Siam, voor sooveel daer bij d'oude historien bekend sijn* [Short history of occurrences in the past and the succession of the Kings of Siam as far as is known from the old histories]. It appeared as *The Short History of the Kings of Siam by Jeremias van Vliet*, tr. Leonard Andaya, ed. David K. Wyatt (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1975). [Hereafter: Van Vliet, 'The Short History'.] In December 1640 the third work followed: *Historiael Verhael der Sieckte ende Doot van Pra Interra-Tsia, 22en Coninck in Siam, ende den Regherenden Coninck Pra Ongh Srij* [Historical Account of the Illness and Death of Pra Interra-Tsia, 22nd King of Siam, and of the Ruling King Pra Ongh Srij]. Its French version of 1663, on which the English translation by W. H. Mundie published in 1904 and 1938 was based, was incomplete and inaccurate. The new translation based on the complete Dutch manuscript by Alfons van der Kraan appeared as 'Historical Account of King Prasat Thong'. [Hereafter: Van Vliet, 'Historical Account'.] These three accounts and their bibliographical details are included in Van Vliet, *Van Vliet's Siam*. All references are from this edition.

⁵ Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 103.

⁶ VOC 1119, Dagregister Schouten, 30 Sept. 1636, fo. 1312.

⁷ Van Nijenrode, 'Remonstrantie', 188-9; Ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat*, 17.

⁸ VOC 1098, Wijtdoelich verhael in hoedaeniger wijze de missive en de geschenken van de doorluchtichsten prince van Orangien aen den coninck van Chiam in den jare 1628 behandicht ende overgelevert zijn door Joost Schouten [Discursive narrative of the way in which the missive and gifts from the Most Serene Prince of Orange have been presented to the King of Siam by Joost Schouten in 1628], 1 Feb. 1629, fo. 24^r.

⁹ For King Songtham's request, see Smith, *The Dutch*, 17-18.

¹⁰ According to Schouten, the Governor of Bangkok was one of the most prominent grantees in Siam and son of the 'former king' of Phatthalung (Bourdelong in Dutch sources). He was married to the sole heiress of Patani but had been driven away from there by political dissension and jealousy. According to the royal chronicle of Patani, Kuning, the daughter of Queen Ungu, had been married to a Siamese nobleman, Okphraya Decha, believed to be from Nakhon Si Thammarat, who later abandoned her. With her mother's consent, Kuning later married the Sultan of Johor. See Andries Teeuw and David K. Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani, The Story of Patani* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), II, 179-82.

¹¹ VOC 1098, Wijtloopich verhael ... Schouten, 1628, fos. 22^v-23^r.

¹² Ibid., fo. 24^v.

¹³ Ibid., fo. 25^{r-v}.

¹⁴ Ibid., fo. 26^{r-v}.

¹⁵ Van Nijenrode, 'Remonstrantie', 181.

¹⁶ VOC 1098, Wijtloopich verhael ... Schouten, 1628, fo. 27^{r-v}.

¹⁷ Ibid., fos. 28^r-31^v.

¹⁸ VOC 1113, Cort verhael over de voijagie naer Jambij ende Chijam alsmede van de overleveringe der missive ende gesonden schenckagie van den prince van Orangien aen den coninck van Chijam in den jaere 1633 binnen de conincklijke hoofstadt Judia, wel ende behoerlijck geffectueert door den commandeur Jan Joosten de Roij [Short account of the voyage to Jambi and Siam, also of the presentation of the missive and the gifts sent by the Prince of Orange to the King of Siam in the year 1633 in the royal capital Ayutthaya, well and properly executed by Commander Jan Joosten de Roij], fos. 452^v, 453^{r-v}.

¹⁹ Ibid., fo. 454^v.

²⁰ In another capacity, Okphra Ratchamontri was a quartermaster in charge of the Portuguese. Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 149. The holder of this title was also mentioned as *syahbandar* in other VOC records.

²¹ VOC 1113, Cort verhael ... De Roij, 1633, fo. 456^v.

²² Ibid., fo. 457^v.

²³ Ibid., fos. 457^v-458^r.

²⁴ Ibid., fo. 464^r. De Roij also noted that even prominent noblemen like the *Phrakhleng* had to attend an elephant of the King when it was ill.

²⁵ Ibid., fo. 460^v.

²⁶ Ibid., fos. 458^v, 460^v.

²⁷ Ibid., fo. 462^r; Reid, *Age of Commerce*, I, 44.

²⁸ VOC 1113, Cort verhael ... De Roij, 1633, fo. 457^r. The official, diplomatic relations between Ayutthaya and Japan only began in 1606 and were conducted between the Thai Kings and the Shoguns. See Yoko Nagazumi, 'Ayutthaya and Japan: Embassies and Trade in the Seventeenth Century', in Breazeale (ed.), *From Japan to Arabia*, 79-103. In 1636, Schouten wrote that the missive from the Prince of Orange was stored alongside the letters from the Emperor of China and the King of Pegu.

²⁹ VOC 1113, Cort verhael ... De Roij, 1633, fo. 467^r.

³⁰ VOC 1113, Translaet missive bij sijne majesteijt van Siam aen den doorluchtigen prince van Orangien geschreven [Translated missive from His Majesty the King of Siam to the Serene Prince of Orange], 28 Oct. 1633, fo. 368^r; Translaet missive van den stadhouder van den Oija Berckelagh aen den gouverneur generael Brouwer [Translated missive from the *Phrakhleng* to Governor-General Brouwer], 31 Jan. 1634, fo. 369^v; Cort verhael ... De Roij, 1633, fo. 463^r.

³¹ VOC 1109, Journaelse aenteijckeninghe Schouten, 28 Sept. 1633, fo. 48^v; VOC 1119, Dagregister Schouten, 26 Sept. 1636, fo. 1308.

³² VOC 1119, Dagregister Schouten, 2 Oct. 1636, fo. 1313. Schouten's appearance before King Prasatthong in 1636 is described in Dhiravat, *Siamese Court Life*, 114-15.

³³ VOC 1119, Dagregister Schouten, 2 Oct. 1636, fo. 1313.

³⁴ Ibid., 28 Sept. 1636, fos. 1311-12; 2 Oct., fo. 1314; 5 Oct., fo. 1317. The citations of Van Diemen's letter of 12 August 1636 are from Van der Kraan, 'Introduction [to 'Diary of the Picnic Incident']', 39.

³⁵ VOC 1118, Dagregister Schouten, 20 Feb. 1635, fo. 131^r.

³⁶ VOC 1119, Dagregister Schouten, 10 Nov. 1636, fo. 1336.

³⁷ Ibid., 13 Nov. 1636, fo. 1337; *Generale missiven*, I: 1610-1638, 28 Dec. 1636, 591.

³⁸ VOC 1119, Missive Schouten to Batavia, 14 Nov. 1636, fo. 1262^v.

³⁹ Van der Kraan, 'Introduction [to 'Diary of the Picnic Incident']', 38-9. See also Chapter Two, 39.

⁴⁰ VOC 862, Missive Batavia to King Prasatthong, 23 Aug. 1638, and Missive Batavia to *Phrakhleng*, 23 Aug. 1638.

⁴¹ VOC 1139, Missive Van Vliet to Batavia, 22 Oct. 1641, fo. 760^r.

⁴² VOC 1139, Journaelsche aenteekeninge Van Vliet, 768^v; VOC 1139, Resolutie van de Raad (Ayutthaya) [Council resolution], 13 Apr.-10 Oct. 1641, fo. 737^v; Missive Van Vliet to Batavia, 22 Oct. 1641, fos. 760^v-761^r.

⁴³ VOC 865, Missive Prince Frederick Henry to King Prasatthong, 16 Dec. 1640.

⁴⁴ VOC 1139, Journaelsche aenteekeninge Van Vliet, 29 Oct. 1641, fos. 774^v-776^r.

⁴⁵ VOC 1139, Rapport van den commissaris Jeremias van Vliet aengaende zijn bevin-
dinge in Siam ende bocht van Pattany [Report of Commissioner Jeremias van Vliet
regarding his mission in Siam and the Bay of Patani], Van Vliet, 28 May 1642, fo. 795^v;
Missive Van Tzum to Batavia, 28 Dec. 1641, fo. 726^{r-v}. The other gifts from King
Prasatthong to the Governor-General consisted of a Siamese gold water flagon, velvet, and
Chinese gold *laken*.

⁴⁶ VOC 1125, Dagregister Van Vliet, 11 July 1637, fos. 621^r-623^r.

⁴⁷ VOC 1139, Rapport Van Vliet, 28 May 1642, fos. 794^v-795^r.

⁴⁸ VOC 1139, Rapport Van Vliet, 28 May 1642, fos. 804^r-805^r.

⁴⁹ VOC 1131, Dagregister Van Vliet, 21 Sept. 1639, fo. 945; 25 Sept. 1639, fo. 946.
This demand clearly troubled both the VOC employees in Ayutthaya and the Siamese
courtiers who knew the court protocol. The former only feebly tried to convince the lat-
ter by saying that it was common for Asian rulers to write to the Governor-General them-
selves.

⁵⁰ Reinier Hesselink suggests that changes in the VOC's diplomatic conduct in relation
to Japan can be seen in the following instances. In response to the forced relocation of the
VOC factory from Hirado to Nagasaki in 1641 and its concomitant restrictions, Van
Diemen's letter of 1642 practically gave the Japanese authorities an ultimatum to restore
Dutch privileges (or the Dutch would stop coming) and demanded a concrete reply to it.
Another occasion concerned the Shogun's desire that a real ambassador be sent from
Holland to come and thank him on behalf of the 'King of Holland' for the good treat-
ment and release of Dutch shipwreck victims held as prisoners in Japan. To avoid the cost
of preparing an embassy from Holland, Van Diemen's successor, Cornelis van der Lijn
(1645-50), in 1649 sent a bogus ambassador who died on board before reaching Japan.
The ambassador's replacement carried out the mission to the shogunal court in 1650. See
Reinier H. Hesselink, *Prisoners from Nambu: Reality and Make-Believe in Seventeenth-
Century Japanese Diplomacy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 127-9, 142-5.

⁵¹ VOC 1067, Missive Van Nijenrode to Kamer Amsterdam, 20 Sept. 1617, fo. 121^{r-v}.

⁵² Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 138-9.

⁵³ VOC 1118, Dagregister Van Vliet, 16-18 Feb. 1634, fo. 55^{r-v}; Nagazumi, 'Ayutthaya
and Japan', 93-5.

⁵⁴ Van Vliet reported the arrivals in Ayutthaya of two embassies from 'Pegu' in 1637 and
1639. His use of 'Pegu' is rather confusing in both the Company report and in his
'Description of Siam'. He wrote that the embassy of 1639 was sent by the 'Ava Emperor
in Pegu'; for the rest of the report he used 'Pegu' and 'Peguan' to describe the embassy and
its ambassador. According to established knowledge, King Thalun (1629-48) left Pegu and
made Ava his royal capital in 1635. Van Vliet's explanation of the purpose of the 1637
embassy is confusing too. To avoid even more confusion, I present the information accord-
ing to Van Vliet and leave its accuracy to further debate.

⁵⁵ VOC 1131, Dagregister Van Vliet, 17-19 March 1639, fos. 858-9.

⁵⁶ Victor Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, 1580-1760*
(Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 55-6.

⁵⁷ VOC 1125, Dagregister Van Vliet, 25 May 1637, fos. 609^v-610^r; 18 June 1637, fo.

616^r; Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 126.

⁵⁸ VOC 1131, Dagregister Van Vliet, 24 Mar. 1639, fos. 861-2.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 22 Mar. 1639, fo. 860.

⁶⁰ Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy*, 24-6, 53-6.

⁶¹ VOC 1131, Dagregister Van Vliet, 26 Mar. 1639, fos. 862-3; Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 134-6.

⁶² VOC 1098, Wijtloopich verhael ... Schouten, 1628, fos. 25^v, 27^v.

⁶³ VOC 1119, Dagregister Van Vliet, 22 Aug. 1636, fo. 1371. According to Van Vliet, although Ceylonese elephants were supposed to be easier to obtain and cheaper, Bengal could not procure them because the King of Kandy would not give his consent for the export of these animals as long as his kingdom was at war with the Portuguese.

⁶⁴ VOC 1131, Dagregister Van Vliet, 29 Mar. 1639, fo. 863. Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 143-4.

⁶⁵ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia 1500-1700: A Political and Economic History* (London: Longman, 1993), 164.

⁶⁶ VOC 1119, Dagregister Schouten, 19 Sept. 1636, fo. 1302.

⁶⁷ VOC 1119, Missive Van Vliet to Batavia, 13 Nov. 1636, fo. 1287.

⁶⁸ Antonio da Silva Rego, 'A Short Survey of Luso-Siamese Relations from 1511 to Modern Times', in the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (ed.), *Thailand and Portugal: 476 Years of Friendship* (2nd ed. Bangkok: The Embassy of Portugal, 1987), 7-25, esp. 10; P. Manuel Teixeira, *Portugal na Tailândia* (Macao: Imprensa Nacional de Macau 1983), 139-40.

⁶⁹ I have identified his name with the help of Rego, 'Luso-Siamese Relations', 10; and Teixeira, *Portugal na Tailândia*, 139-40.

⁷⁰ VOC 1131, Dagregister Van Vliet, 17 Apr. 1639, fos. 869-70.

⁷¹ The name of the Franciscan father, which is not mentioned in the Dutch account, is Fr António de S. Domingos. See Teixeira, *Portugal na Tailândia*, 139.

⁷² Schouten, 'Description of Siam', 109; Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 129.

⁷³ VOC 1131, Dagregister Van Vliet, 17 May 1639, fo. 882.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 19 May 1639, fos. 886-7.

⁷⁵ In 1636, the Shogunate, which was, instead of the Emperor, the real power in Japan, forced the Portuguese to move from Nagasaki to Deshima and kept them under strict surveillance. Later, it asked the VOC for naval help to attack Macao and Manila. The Dutch instead assisted it in suppressing the Christian-inspired Shimabara Revolt. The revolt confirmed the perceived threat presented by the local Christians and the Portuguese in the way of thinking of the Japanese authority. On 4 August 1639, the Japanese embargo on trading with Portuguese Macao was declared.

⁷⁶ VOC 1131, Dagregister Van Vliet, 19 May 1639, fos. 887-90.

⁷⁷ Ibid., fos. 890-1.

⁷⁸ Ibid., fo. 891.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 24 May 1639, fos. 898-9.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 30 May 1639, fos. 902-3.

⁸¹ Van Vliet, 'Short History', 243; id., 'Historical Account', 321.

⁸² VOC 1131, Dagregister Van Vliet, 7 June 1639, fo. 910.

⁸³ Ibid., 13 June 1639, fos. 912-13.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 23 June 1639, fo. 917; 29 June 1639, fo. 919; Rego, 'Luso-Siamese Relations', 10; Teixeira, *Portugal na Tailândia*, 139-40.

⁸⁵ VOC 1131, Dagregister Van Vliet, 19 July 1639, fo. 925.

⁸⁶ For instance, the Dutch reported that practising Roman Catholicism in Siam was prohibited for a certain period to anyone who did not belong to the Portuguese community. VOC 1139, Missive Van Vliet to Batavia, 4 Nov. 1641, fo. 748^r.

⁸⁷ VOC 1119, Dagregister Schouten, 6 Nov. 1636, fo. 1332.

⁸⁸ King Prasatthong treated the Mon refugees well, putting them under the supervision of chiefs of their own nationality and giving them a good settlement site. Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 125-6.

⁸⁹ VOC 1118, Dagregister Schouten, 27 June 1634, fo. 74^v; 19 July, fo. 75^v; 28 July, fo. 76^r; 28 Sept., fo. 78^r; 2 Oct., fo. 78^r; 10, 14 & 16 Oct., fos. 78^v-79^v; 2 Nov., fo. 79^v.

⁹⁰ Schouten, 'Description of Siam', 98-9; Dhiravat, *Siamese Court Life*, 85; Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 117. Van Vliet estimated a lower number of the participants but confirmed Schouten's impression.

⁹¹ VOC 1119, Dagregister Schouten, 22 Oct. 1636, fos. 1323-4; *see also* Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 117, 119.

⁹² VOC 1125, Dagregister Van Vliet, 12 Aug. 1637, fo. 629^{r-v}.

⁹³ VOC 1139, Dagregister Van Vliet, 26 Oct. 1641, fo. 774^v.

⁹⁴ VOC 1125, Dagregister Van Vliet, 19 Aug. 1637, fos. 630^r-631^r.

⁹⁵ Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 156; *id.*, 'Short History', 243, 244.

⁹⁶ VOC 1125, Dagregister Van Vliet, 19 Aug. 1637, fo. 630^v.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 19 Aug. 1637, fo. 631^r.

⁹⁸ Van Nijenrode, 'Remonstrantie', 182, 188.

⁹⁹ Choisy, *Journal of a Voyage to Siam*, 174-5.

¹⁰⁰ For Prasatthong's millennium crisis, *see* Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 198-200.

¹⁰¹ VOC 1131, Dagregister Van Vliet, 16 Apr. 1639, fos. 868-9.

¹⁰² Schouten, 'Description of Siam', 98; Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 117.

¹⁰³ VOC 1125, Dagregister Van Vliet, 29 Aug. 1637, fo. 633^r.

Notes to Chapter Four

¹ Van Nijenrode, 'Remonstrantie', 181; Schouten, 'Description of Siam', 98; Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 112-13, 117.

² Schouten, 'Description of Siam', 97.

³ Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 107.

⁴ Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 114 (citation); *id.*, 'Short History', 196, 234.

⁵ Van Nijenrode, 'Remonstrantie', 182, 188; Schouten, 'Description of Siam', 109-10.

⁶ Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 112, 145.

⁷ VOC 1119, Dagregister Van Vliet, 28 Mar. 1636, fo. 1340^{r-v}.

⁸ VOC 1127, Missive Van Vliet to Batavia, 22 Oct. 1638, fos. 301^r, 303^r.

⁹ VOC 1125, Dagregister Van Vliet, 20 Sept. 1637, fo. 635^v.

¹⁰ VOC 1113, Cort verhael ... De Roij, 1633, fo. 465^v.

¹¹ VOC 1125, Dagregister Van Vliet, 22 Sept. 1637, fo. 636^r; Van Vliet, 'Short History', 243; *id.*, 'Description of Siam', 114, 146-7.

¹² VOC 1125, Dagregister Van Vliet, 6 May 1637, fo. 603^v.

¹³ VOC 1139, Missive Van Vliet and Reinier van Tzum to Joan van Twist, Governor of Malacca, 22 Oct. 1641, fos. 756^v-757^r.

¹⁴ Van Nijenrode, 'Remonstrantie', 189; Schouten, 'Description of Siam', 100; Van Vliet, 'Historical Account', 259.

¹⁵ VOC 1132, Verhael van d'onwettige, erchlistige, ende geweldige successie der Coningen in Siam, Schouten, 1639, fos. 483-9.

¹⁶ For an analysis of the plot of 'Historical Account', *see* Dhiravat na Pombejra and Chris Baker, 'Introduction [to Van Vliet's 'Historical Account']', in Van Vliet, *Van Vliet's Siam*, 247-54, esp. 250-1.

¹⁷ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', "Chapter 1: The Usurpation of the Throne, 1628-1629", 121-52.

¹⁸ VOC 1132, Verhael ... Schouten, 1639, fo. 483.

¹⁹ Yamada Nagamasa, born around 1590 in present-day Shizuoka, arrived in Ayutthaya in 1612. By 1621, he became one of the heads of the Japanese community there and entered royal service. Schouten did not mention this person but only the Japanese guards (in passing).

²⁰ VOC 1132, Verhael ... Schouten, 1639, fo. 483; Van Vliet, 'Historical Account', 259.

²¹ VOC 1132, Verhael ... Schouten, 1639, fo. 483.

²² Van Vliet, 'Historical Account', 262-5.

²³ *Ibid.* 265.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 269, 271-3.

²⁵ Ibid. 272-3.

²⁶ VOC 1132, Verhael ... Schouten, 1639, fos. 485-6; Van Vliet, 'Historical Account', 280-1.

²⁷ Van Vliet, 'Historical Account', 299.

²⁸ The *Wangna* Prince or the *Uparat* was mostly understood to be the heir-apparent; however, it was not always so in reality. Dutch records of the later period often mention the holder of this office as the 'Crown Prince' (*kroonprins*).

²⁹ Van Vliet, 'Historical Account', 300-1.

³⁰ Ibid. 304-7.

³¹ Okya Phitsanulok himself told Van Vliet the story about the white elephants, which the latter put down in his writing. Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 176.

³² VOC 1132, Verhael ... Schouten, 1639, fos. 488-9; Van Vliet, 'Historical Account', 315-18.

³³ VOC 1132, Verhael ... Schouten, 1639, fo. 487.

³⁴ Van Vliet, 'Historical Account', 312.

³⁵ VOC 1157, Dagregister Van Tzum, 9 June 1644. Cited in Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'The Thasai Prince's Rebellion of 1642: A Forgotten Event in Ayutthayan History', in *Dedication to Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani Vadhana Krom Luang Naradhiwas Rajanagarindra on Her 80th Birthday* (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 2003), 145-52, esp. 151.

³⁶ VOC 1132, Verhael ... Schouten, 1639, fo. 489; Van Vliet, 'Historical Account', 321. Van Vliet wrote: 'The events I have related show how this King, through crafty plots and many murders, has succeeded in usurping the Crown, and how after having acquired that Crown illegally, he shed a great deal of blood to confirm his possession of it. Nonetheless, it is worthy of note that in matters relating to government and well-being of his Kingdom, His Majesty has been a wise, careful, and mighty Prince, who has possessed his Kingdom in prosperity and peace.' The main difference is: in the original signed by the author himself, Schouten used the word 'moderate' (*matich*, or *matig* in modern Dutch), while Van Vliet, according to Van der Kraan's translation based on the transcription by Seichi Iwao in 1958, used the word 'mighty' which is *machtig* in Dutch.

³⁷ Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 116; *Generale missiven*, II: 1639-1655, 18 Dec. 1639, 79.

³⁸ Van Vliet, 'Historical Account', 321-2.

³⁹ Sombat Chantornwong, 'khamson thang kanmuang khong van Vliet rue withesobai khong prachao prasatthong [Van Vliet's political teaching or foreign policy of King Prasatthong]', *warasan thammasat* [Journal of Thammasat University], 6-1 (1976), 71-118. The author shows that Van Vliet's 'Historical Account' follows the tenor in Machiavelli's writings.

⁴⁰ See Ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat*, 22-4; Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 176-85; Smith, *The Dutch*, 26-7; see also Chapter One, 27.

⁴¹ VOC 1113, Bedencking over 't versoeck des Coninx van Siam, om d'assistentie eeniger scheepsmacht tot conquiste van Patany [Consideration of the King of Siam's request for naval assistance to conquer Patani], Schouten, 9 May 1634, fos. 486^r-490^r.

⁴² VOC 1113, Bedencking ... Schouten, 1634, fo. 487^{r-v}. On this point, Van Vliet listed in detail how the Dutch-Siamese alliance had been of assistance to each other in the past. See Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 130.

⁴³ Ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat*, 33.

⁴⁴ VOC 1113, Bedencking ... Schouten, 1634, fo. 489^v.

⁴⁵ Patani asked Prasatthong's brother, the *Phrakhleng*, and the prominent monks of Wat Mahathat and 'Wat Deun' to help it reconcile itself with the King. ('Wad Deun' is either Wat Doem (now known as Wat Ayothya) or Wat Phutthaisawan. See the explanation in *Van Vliet's Siam*, 120 n. 67.) Its tributary mission arrived in Ayutthaya in September 1637, after Queen Ungu's death. VOC 1119, Dagregister Van Vliet, 23 Mar. 1636, fo. 1340^r; 6 Aug. 1636, fo. 1361^v; VOC 1125, Dagregister Van Vliet, 18 Sept. 1636, fo. 635^v; Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 132.

⁴⁶ VOC 1113, Instructie Schouten aan Van Vliet [Instructions by Schouten to Van Vliet], 4 Feb. 1634, fo. 419^v.

⁴⁷ VOC 1118, Dagregister Schouten, 6 Mar. 1635, fo. 131^r.

- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 28 Oct. 1634, fo. 79^v.
⁴⁹ Ibid., 25 Sept. 1634, fo. 77^v.
⁵⁰ VOC 1113, Dagregister Schouten, 11 Jan. 1634, fo. 443^v.
⁵¹ VOC 1118, Dagregister Schouten, 15 June 1634, fo. 73^r.
⁵² Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 107, 146 (citation).
⁵³ Ibid. 148.
⁵⁴ VOC 1113, Instructie Schouten aan Van Vliet, 4 Feb. 1634, fo. 419^v.
⁵⁵ VOC 1139, Rapport Van Vliet, 1641-2, fo. 793^v.
⁵⁶ VOC 1105, Schriftelijk rapport van seker besendinge gedaen met vyff scheepen en jachten zoo op negotien als tot affbreuck van onse algemeyne vyanden alsmede om onse missive en medegegeven presenten van d' Ed. heer generael aende Coninginne van Patani ende Coninck van Chiam te presentieren [Written report of the sending of five ships and yachts for trading and fighting our enemies as well as to present our missive and presents given by the Honourable General to the Queen of Patani and the King of Siam], Antonij Caen, 1632, fo. 276^r.
⁵⁷ VOC 1105, Schriftelijk rapport ... Caen, 1632, fo. 274^{r-v}.
⁵⁸ VOC 1113, Cort verhael ... De Roij, 1633, fo. 466^{r-v}.
⁵⁹ VOC 1113, Dagregister Schouten, 2, 17 & 18 Jan. 1634, fos. 442^r-444^v.
⁶⁰ VOC 1219, Rapport van Westerwolt aan Gouverneur-Generaal wegen den toestand van 's Compagnies negotie in Siam sedert 26 februari 1656 [Report by Westerwolt to the Governor General concerning the state of the Company's trade in Siam since 26 February 1656], 16 Nov. 1656, fos. 811^r-812^r.
⁶¹ Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 148-9.
⁶² VOC 1125, Dagregister Van Vliet, 11 July 1637, fos. 621^r-623^r.
⁶³ VOC 1118, Dagregister Van Vliet, 26 Apr. 1634, fo. 64^v.
⁶⁴ VOC 1216, Missive Westerwolt to Batavia, 16 Feb. 1656, fo. 393^r.
⁶⁵ VOC 1113, Dagregister Schouten, 22 Dec. 1633, fos. 389^v-390^v. For Van Meerwijk's case, see Ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat*, 21.
⁶⁶ VOC 1118, Dagregister Schouten, 26 July 1634, fo. 75^r.
⁶⁷ VOC 1113, Rapport Schouten, 6 Apr. 1634, fo. 431^v.
⁶⁸ VOC 1118, Dagregister Van Vliet, 14 Mar. 1634, fo. 59^v.
⁶⁹ VOC 1131, Dagregister Van Vliet, 1 Mar. 1639, fo. 855.
⁷⁰ Ibid., 13 Mar. 1639, fo. 858.
⁷¹ Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 116.
⁷² VOC 1139, Rapport Van Vliet, 28 May 1642, fo. 790^r.
⁷³ VOC 1113, Missive Van Vliet to Batavia, 4 Feb. 1634, fo. 412^{r-v}.
⁷⁴ VOC 1113, Dagregister Schouten, 16 Jan. 1634, fo. 444^r.
⁷⁵ VOC 1118, Dagregister Van Vliet, 29 Mar. 1634, fo. 61^r.
⁷⁶ VOC 1125, Dagregister Van Vliet, 21 Oct. 1637, fo. 641^r.
⁷⁷ VOC 1131, Dagregister Van Vliet, 25 Feb. 1639, fo. 852.
⁷⁸ VOC 1125, Dagregister Van Vliet, 9 May 1637, fo. 604^v.
⁷⁹ VOC 1119, Dagregister Van Vliet, 8 June 1636, fo. 1361^r.

Notes to Chapter Five

¹ VOC 1175, Rapport Van Goens, 8 Jan. 1651, fos. 348^v-349^r; Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 248-9.

² Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', "Chapter 4: Conflict among the Princes, 1650-1657", 248-82; Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'The Accession of King Narai according to Dutch Sources', paper given at the Seminar *Crossroad of Thai-Dutch History*, National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, 9-11 September 2004.

³ The 1657 conspiracy is mentioned in VOC 1223, Missive Van Rijck to Batavia, 22 Feb. 1657, fo. 806^v; *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, tr. Richard D. Cushman, ed. David K. Wyatt (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 2000), 235-43; see also Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 310. The conspiracy of 1670 to replace King Narai with his half-brother involved not only prominent officials but also some women who served as mes-

sengers and some monks who gave the plotters their blessing. VOC 1278, Missive N. de Roij to Batavia, 20 Oct. 1670, fos. 1882^v-1883^r.

⁴ VOC 1219, Rapport Westerwolt, 16 Nov. 1656, fos. 815^v-816^r.

⁵ Ibid., fos. 815^v, 818^{r-v}.

⁶ VOC 1113, Cort verhael ... J. J. de Roij, fo. 457^v; VOC 1119, Dagregister Schouten, 4 Oct. 1636, fo. 1316; VOC 1157, Journaelse aenteekening Van Tzum, 18 & 19 Mar. 1644, fos. 660^v-661^r.

⁷ The Thai chronicles and Gervaise explain that Sisuthammaracha wanted to take a 'uterine sister' of Narai as his wife and thereby offended the Prince who considered his uncle's passion for his sister improper. In view of the fact that Narai himself later made one of his half-sisters his queen, the conflict between him and his uncle had rather a political than a moral cause. *The Ship of Sulaiman*, an account written by a member of the Persian embassy to Siam in 1685, suggests that this conflict arose from Narai's political ambitions. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 228; Gervaise, *History of Siam*, 158; Muhammad Rabi Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim, *The Ship of Sulaiman*, tr. John O'Kane (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 94-7; for an analysis of the conflict between Narai and Sisuthammaracha, see Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 260-7.

⁸ Thai chronicles mention the help from the Javanese, the Cham, the Japanese, and the Mon. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 363-4, 366-8. *The Ship of Sulaiman* (95) claims that the Persians and 'Mughals' (probably Indian Muslims) made a significant contribution to Narai's victory. Gervaise (158) mentioned Portuguese aid.

⁹ VOC 1219, Rapport Westerwolt, 16 Nov. 1656, fo. 805^v.

¹⁰ This explains not only why foreign forces were needed in times of troubles but also why foreign groups, who were allowed to be armed perhaps because they were maritime traders, sometimes made a bold and almost successful attempt to attack the royal palace, as did the Japanese during King Songtham's reign in 1611-12, the Makassarese in 1686, and the Chinese in 1733.

¹¹ VOC 1216, Missive Westerwolt to Batavia, 16 Feb. 1656, fo. 394^{r-v}.

¹² VOC 1219, Rapport Westerwolt, 16 Nov. 1656, fo. 810^v.

¹³ Ibid., fo. 824^v.

¹⁴ VOC 1223, Missive Van Rijck to Batavia, 8 Jan. 1657, fo. 787^v.

¹⁵ Ibid., fos. 793^v-795^r.

¹⁶ No Dutch report is available on the Makassarese uprising. The Makassarese plotted to replace King Narai with one of his brothers who was supposed to embrace Islam but failed to do so. For an analysis of the event, see Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 405-10; Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West*, 396-401; Michael Smithies, 'Accounts of the Makassar Revolt, 1686', *JSS* 90/18&2 (2003), 73-100.

¹⁷ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 326.

¹⁸ Ibid. 290; VOC 1236, Missive Van Rijck to Batavia, 25 Feb. 1661, fo. 145.

¹⁹ VOC 1290, Rapport Nicolaas de Roij, 20 Nov. 1672, fo. 245^r.

²⁰ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 326.

²¹ VOC 1219, Rapport Westerwolt, 16 Nov. 1656, fo. 813^v.

²² For a detailed study of King Narai's war efforts, see Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 'Chapter 5: Expansion and Conflicts, 1658-1672', 284-319.

²³ VOC 1278, Missive N. de Roij to Batavia, 20 Oct. 1670, fos. 1876^r-1879^r. For the tin trade at Phuket, see Dhiravat, 'Towards a History of Seventeenth-Century Phuket'.

²⁴ *Generale missiven*, III: 1655-1674, 31 Jan. 1673, 869; Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 312-13.

²⁵ VOC 1278, Missive N. de Roij to Batavia, 20 Oct. 1670, fos. 1876^r-1879^r.

²⁶ Dhiravat, 'Crown Trade and Court Politics', 140.

²⁷ VOC 1278, Missive N. de Roij to Batavia, 20 Oct. 1670, fo. 1880^r.

²⁸ VOC 1290, Rapport N. de Roij, 20 Nov. 1672, fo. 258^r. Aqa Muhammad was originally from Astarabad. About this person, see Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim, *The Ship of Sulaiman*, 98-103; Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 326-7.

²⁹ VOC 1339, Instructie Dirk de Jongh aan Aernout Faa [Instructions by Dirk De Jongh to Aarnout Faa], 10 Dec. 1678, fo. 476^{r-v}.

³⁰ De Bèze, *1688 Revolution in Siam*, 10-16.

³¹ VOC 1386, Missive Faa to Batavia, 10 Jan. 1684, fos. 652^v-653^r.

³² VOC 1175, Rapport Van Goens, 8 Jan. 1650, fo. 348^v.

³³ A short but detailed study of this subject is Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'Okya Sombattiban and the VOC, c. 1648-1656', in id., *Court, Company and Campong*, 9-24, esp. 21.

³⁴ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 290; *Generale missiven*, III: 1655-1674, 26 Jan. 1660, 327-8.

³⁵ VOC 1219, Rapport Westerwolt, 16 Nov. 1656, fos. 812^{r-v}, 813^v.

³⁶ Nidhi, *kanmuang thai samai phra narai*, 24-53.

³⁷ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 350-3.

³⁸ The *Société des Missions Étrangères* was founded in 1659 under the auspices of the French Church and with the Pope's sanction with the primary purpose of training indigenous clergy in East Asia (the southern and north-eastern provinces of China and the states of so-called 'Further India', namely Korea, Laos, Cochín China, Tonkin, and Annam). Up till then, the Archbishopric of Goa (first established in 1534) had been claiming, under the terms of the *Padroado real* (royal patronage system), exclusive jurisdiction over all priests working in Asia; this in effect subverted the papal authority. The post-Reformation papacy, which also aimed at promoting Christian missions overseas (in which the Portuguese patronage had not been successful), created in 1622 the *Propaganda Fide* (Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith) to co-ordinate missionary work around the world and to end the national patronage system and develop indigenous churches answering directly to Rome.

³⁹ For a discussion about the strategy and the mistakes of the *Missions Étrangères* in Ayutthaya, see Ronald S. Love, 'Monarchs, Merchants, and Missionaries in Early Modern Asia: The Missions Étrangères in Siam, 1662-1684', *The International History Review*, XXI/1 (March 1999), 1-27, esp. 9-10, 11-12.

⁴⁰ Ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat*, 10.

⁴¹ VOC 1219, Rapport Westerwolt, 16 Nov. 1656, fos. 827^v-828^r.

⁴² VOC 1304, Missive Johannes van der Spijck to Batavia, 5 Aug. & 20 Nov. 1674, fo. 22^r; VOC 1311, Missive Van der Spijck to Batavia, 10 Dec. 1674, fo. 297; VOC 1314, Missive Van der Spijck to Batavia, 30 Nov. 1675, fo. 14^v.

⁴³ There are several, but unsatisfactory, biographies of Constantine Phaulkon. For comments on this point and a short survey of Phaulkon's life and career, see Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West*, 'Chapter 3: Phaulkon, the Greek Favourite', 193-204.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 201.

⁴⁵ VOC 1415, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 17 Dec. 1685, fos. 909^v-910^r.

⁴⁶ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 348-9; for an analysis of Phaulkon's intermediary function, see Jurrien van Goor, 'Merchants in Royal Service: Constant Phaulkon as Phraklang in Ayutthaya, 1683-1688', in Roderich Ptak and Dietmar Rothermund (eds.), *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade, c. 1400-1750* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991), 445-65.

⁴⁷ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 357-8; De Bèze, *1688 Revolution in Siam*, 17; VOC 1386, Missive Faa to Batavia, 10 Jan. 1684, fos. 652^v-653^r. Okya Wang's father had been an interpreter for the Dutch.

⁴⁸ VOC 1377, Missive Faa to Batavia, 27 Jan. 1682, fo. 528^v.

⁴⁹ VOC 1407, Memorie Faa zaliger aan Keijts [Memorandum from the late Faa to Keijts], 15 Jan. 1685, fo. 3218^r.

⁵⁰ Van Goor, 'Merchants in Royal Service', 458.

⁵¹ VOC 1386, Missive Faa to Batavia, 10 Jan. 1684, fos. 658^v-659^r. Charles II sent Phaulkon an autograph letter acknowledging the presents. See Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam*, 127.

⁵² For this episode, see Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 410-16.

⁵³ Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim, *The Ship of Sulaiman*, 98-9.

⁵⁴ VOC 1415, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 17 Dec. 1685, fo. 909^r; *Generale missiven*, IV: 1675-1685, 18 Mar. 1685, 786.

⁵⁵ VOC 1415, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 17 Dec. 1685, fo. 916^r. De Choisy described the first celebration, on 1 November 1685, as being accompanied by Siamese, Chinese and Peguan performances, and that the second event, on 4 and 5 November 1685, had a

fireworks display. De Choisy, *Journal of a Voyage to Siam*, 178, 180-1.

⁵⁶ Claude Count de Forbin and six Jesuits came to Siam with the first French embassy to King Narai's court under the leadership of the Chevalier De Chaumont in 1685.

⁵⁷ See Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West*, 224-8.

⁵⁸ VOC 1415, Rapport Keijts, 6 Feb. 1686, fos. 932^v-933^r.

⁵⁹ VOC 1320, Briefie [Letter] Van der Spijk to Batavia, 21 Jan. 1676, fo. 311^r.

⁶⁰ NA 1330, Missive De Jongh to Batavia, 20 Dec. 1677, fo. 688^r.

⁶¹ VOC 1415, Rapport Keijts, 6 Feb. 1686, fo. 934^r.

⁶² Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West*, 267.

⁶³ VOC 1415, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 17 Dec. 1685, fo. 910^r.

⁶⁴ VOC 1438, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 26 Jan. 1687, fos. 643^{r-v}, 648^r.

⁶⁵ VOC 1415, Rapport Keijts, 6 Feb. 1685, fos. 932^v-933^r.

⁶⁶ See Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 393-4.

⁶⁷ VOC 1440, Keijts to Batavia, 23 Nov. 1687, fos. 2259^r-2261^r.

⁶⁸ Claude de Forbin, *The Siamese Memoirs of Count Claude de Forbin, 1685-1688*, ed. Michael Smithies (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1996), 77, 143.

⁶⁹ VOC 1438, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 26 Jan. 1687, fos. 646^v-647^r.

⁷⁰ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 305.

⁷¹ VOC 1253, Missive Enoch Poolvoet to Batavia, 26 Oct. 1665, fos. 1833-5.

⁷² VOC 1278, Missive N. de Roij to Batavia, 20 Oct. 1670, fo. 1883^v.

⁷³ VOC 1290, Rapport N. de Roij, 20 Nov. 1672, fo. 254^r.

⁷⁴ Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade, 1652-1853* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), 28-57; Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 306.

⁷⁵ VOC 1311, Missive Van der Spijck to Batavia, 10 Dec. 1674, fo. 304^r.

⁷⁶ VOC 1240, Rapport Van Rijck, 3 Nov. 1662, fo. 1489^{r-v}.

⁷⁷ VOC 1236, Missive Van Rijck, 7 & 10 Oct. 1661, fos. 674-7.

⁷⁸ VOC 1240, Rapport Van Rijck, 3 Nov. 1662, fos. 1499^r-1501^r. The VOC had established a trading office in Sukadana as early as 1617, only to see it destroyed by troops from Mataram five years later.

⁷⁹ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 367-9; VOC 1377, Missive Faa to Batavia, 27 Jan. 1682, fo. 528^v.

⁸⁰ For an analysis of the Dutch-Siamese frictions in the 1680s, see Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 367-71, 388-90.

⁸¹ For the Siamese embassy to Portugal, see Michael Smithies and Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'Instructions given to the Siamese Envoys sent to Portugal, 1684', *JSS* 90/1&2 (2002), 125-35. For the exchange of embassies between Siam and France, see Van der Cruysse, *Siamese and the West*. For the Persian embassy to King Narai, see M. Ismail Marcinkowski, 'A Unique Source in Persian: The Ship of Sulaiman', in id., *From Isfahan to Ayutthaya: Contacts between Iran and Siam in the 17th Century* (Pustaka Nasional: Singapore, 2005), 18-43. Another mission which has been well researched is the Siamese embassy to the Vatican which arrived there only after Narai's death. See Michael Smithies and Luigi Bressan, *Siam and the Vatican in the Seventeenth Century* (River Books: Bangkok, 2001).

⁸² Smithies and Dhiravat, 'Instructions given to the Siamese Envoys sent to Portugal, 1684', 133.

⁸³ VOC 1453, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 5 Dec. 1688, fo. 247^v.

⁸⁴ VOC 1415, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 17 Dec. 1685, fos. 896^r-897^v.

⁸⁵ VOC 1314, Missive Van der Spijck to Batavia, 30 Nov. 1675, fos. 11^r, 14^{r-v}.

⁸⁶ Love, 'Monarchs, Merchants, and Missionaries', 15, 18.

⁸⁷ De Choisy, *Journal of Voyage to Siam*, 154.

⁸⁸ Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim, *The Ship of Sulaiman*, 44-5.

⁸⁹ De Chaumont, *Embassy to Siam*, 43; De Choisy, *Journal of Voyage to Siam*, 155, 197.

⁹⁰ The scenes of delivering the state missives from Persia and France are described by Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim, *The Ship of Sulaiman*, 60-1, 63-4; De Choisy, *Journal of Voyage to Siam*, 157-8, 161; De Chaumont, *Embassy to Siam*, 47-51.

⁹¹ Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim, *The Ship of Sulaiman*, 60; De Choisy, *Journal of Voyage to Siam*, 154.

- ⁹² De Chaumont, *Embassy to Siam*, 51.
- ⁹³ Ibid. 79.
- ⁹⁴ Marcinkowski, 'The Ship of Sulaiman', 28.
- ⁹⁵ Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim, *The Ship of Sulaiman*, 68, 77-8, 94, 95, 99-100.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid. 59.
- ⁹⁷ John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1984), 176.
- ⁹⁸ De Choisy, *Journal of Voyage to Siam*, 201.
- ⁹⁹ VOC 1438, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 26 Jan. 1687, fos. 652^v-653^r; Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 386-7.
- ¹⁰⁰ VOC 1415, Rapport Keijts, 6 Feb. 1686, fo. 934^r.
- ¹⁰¹ Van Goor, 'Merchants as diplomats', 40.
- ¹⁰² VOC 1415, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 17 Dec. 1685, fos. 917^{r-v}, 918^r.
- ¹⁰³ VOC 1440, Keijts to Batavia, 23 Nov. 1687, fos. 2258^r-2259^r.
- ¹⁰⁴ VOC 1415, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 17 Dec. 1685, fo. 918^v; Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 396-8.
- ¹⁰⁵ VOC 1216, Missive Westerwolt to Batavia, 16 Feb. 1656, fo. 394^{r-v}. Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 256.
- ¹⁰⁶ VOC 1362, Missive Faa to Batavia, 17 Nov. 1680, fo. 940^v; VOC 1362, Translaet missive in't Maleys geschreven door den koning van Siam aen Haer Eds., ontfangen tot Batavia den 4 februari anno 1681 [Translation of a Malay letter written by [the *Phrakhlhang* in the name of] the King of Siam to Their Honours, received in Batavia on 4 February 1681], fo. 993^v.
- ¹⁰⁷ VOC 1453, Eijsch van diverse benodigheden voor den Siamsen majesteijt [List of various items required for the Siamese King], 18 Jan. 1688, fo. 236^v.
- ¹⁰⁸ VOC 1304, Missive Van der Spijck to Batavia, 5 Aug. 1674, fos. 16-23, 20^v-21^r.
- ¹⁰⁹ VOC 1407, Memorie Faa zaliger aan Keijts, 15 Jan. 1685, fo. 3214^r.
- ¹¹⁰ VOC 1330, Missive De Jongh to Batavia, 20 Dec. 1677, fo. 690^r.
- ¹¹¹ VOC 1227, Missive Van Rijck and Poolvoet to Batavia, 18 Dec. 1657, fo. 434^{r-v}.
- ¹¹² VOC 1350, Missive Faa to Batavia, 18 Jan. 1679, f. 441.
- ¹¹³ VOC 1440, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 1 Nov. 1687, fo. 2227^{r-v}.
- ¹¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁵ VOC 1438, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 20 Jan. 1687, fos. 641^v-642^r.
- ¹¹⁶ VOC 1339, Missive Faa to Batavia, 13 Nov. 1678, fos. 444^r-455^r, 450^r, 454^{r-v}; VOC 1362, Missive Faa to Batavia, 17 Nov. 1680, fo. 940^v.
- ¹¹⁷ VOC 1438, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 20 Jan. 1687, fo. 651^v.
- ¹¹⁸ VOC 1253, Missive Poolvoet to Batavia, 22 Dec. 1665, fo. 1986.
- ¹¹⁹ VOC 1438, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 26 Jan. 1687, fo. 647^v.
- ¹²⁰ Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West*, 420.
- ¹²¹ VOC 1362, Missive Faa to Batavia, 17 Nov. 1680, fo. 940^v.
- ¹²² VOC 1438, Brieven van den coningh van Siam en Oija Berquelangh geschreven aan haar Edelen [Letters from the King of Siam and Okya *Phrakhlhang* [written by Okya Phrasadet in place of the *Phrakhlhang*] to Their Honours in Batavia], 1687, fo. 656^r.
- ¹²³ VOC 1386, Missive Faa to Batavia, 10 Jan. 1684, fos. 658^v-659^r. Phaulkon also offered his services to the French envoys to procure Asian curiosities for Louis XIV. De Choisy, *Journal of Voyage to Siam*, 209.
- ¹²⁴ VOC 1438, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 26 Jan. 1687, fos. 646^v-647^r.
- ¹²⁵ Simon de la Loubère, *A New Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Siam*, ed. David K. Wyatt (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1986), 99-100.
- ¹²⁶ De Choisy, *Journal of Voyage to Siam*, 195.
- ¹²⁷ VOC 1322, Missive De Jongh to Batavia, 26 Dec. 1676, fo. 1213^v; Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 325-6; Dhiravat, *Siamese Court Life*, 101.
- ¹²⁸ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 277.
- ¹²⁹ VOC 1415, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 17 Dec. 1685, fos. 918^v, 916^r.
- ¹³⁰ De Choisy, *Journal of Voyage to Siam*, 180.
- ¹³¹ VOC 1415, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 17 Dec. 1685, fos. 918^v, 916^r.
- ¹³² La Loubère, *Relation of the Kingdom of Siam*, 99-100.

¹³³ VOC 1362, Missive Faa to Batavia, 17 Nov. 1680, fo. 960^v.

¹³⁴ Ian Hodges, 'Time in Transition: King Narai and the Luang Prasoet Chronicle of Ayutthaya', *JSS* 87/1&2 (1999), 33-44, esp. 35-6.

¹³⁵ VOC 1415, Korte aenteeckeningen van't gewesene opperhoofd Faa [Brief notes from former *Opperhoofd* Faa], 17 Jan. 1685, fo. 887^{r-v}; Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 396-7.

¹³⁶ The traditional form of time-measurement was to establish a system of time-keeping from the regular motions of the planets by astrologers.

¹³⁷ Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West*, 255-60.

¹³⁸ Michael Smithies, 'Eclipses in Siam, 1685 and 1688, and Their Representation', *JSS* 91 (2003), 189-204.

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¹ Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam*, 192-3.

² Wyatt, *Thailand*, 117.

³ Dhiravat, 'Shift to Isolation?'; Raben, 'King Phetracha'.

⁴ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 452-3; id., 'Shift to Isolation?', 252.

⁵ Raben, 'King Phetracha', 16.

⁶ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', "Chapter 8: 1686-1688, The End of the Prasatthong Dynasty", 405-53; Van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West*, 'Chapter 20: The Revolution in Siam (1688)', 427-67.

⁷ The original report is in VOC 1444, *Beknopt verhaal van de wonderlyke verandering voorgevallen in het koninkryke Siam desen jare 1688* [Concise story of the astounding change occurred in the Kingdom of Siam this year 1688], 30 Nov. 1688, fos. 1639-1651. It was first published under the same title in 1689 (Amsterdam: Aert Dircksz. Oosaeen), then as *Kort-bondig verhaal van den op en ondergang, van d'heer Faulkon, ridder der ordre van St. Michiel, en voornaam gunsteling des konings van Siam: mitsgaders van de dood des konings, en 't verdrijven der Franschen uit dat Rijk, alles kort op den anderen gevolgd, binnen 't jaar 1688 en in Indiën zelve t'zamen gesteld* (Amsterdam: Gerardus Borstius, 1690). It was also published in Valentyn, *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indië*, 3, 1, 80-9. Based on a French version, the English translation 'Succinct Account of What Occurred in the Kingdom of Siam in the Year 1688' appears in Michael Smithies (ed. and tr.), *Witnesses to a Revolution: Siam 1688* (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 2004), 124-34. (Hereafter: 'Succinct Account 1688'.) All references are from this edition.

⁸ Sources mentioning the backgrounds of Phetracha and Sorasak are *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 300-1, 308-14; La Loubère, *The Kingdom of Siam*, 99; Claude de Bèze, *1688 Revolution in Siam: The Memoir of Father de Bèze, s.j.*, tr. with commentary by E. W. Hutchinson (repr., Bangkok: White Lotus, 2002), 58-62.

⁹ VOC 1453, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 5 Dec. 1688, fo. 240^r.

¹⁰ 'Succinct Account 1688', 125.

¹¹ VOC 1453, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 5 Dec. 1688, fo. 247^r.

¹² *Ibid.*, fo. 247^v. Keijts noted that this was the title according to the instruction for the Thai Ambassador to the King of Portugal in 1684.

¹³ VOC 1453, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 5 Dec. 1688, fo. 247^v. *See also* Anonymous, 'Relation of the Principal Circumstances Which Occurred in the Revolution in the Kingdom of Siam', in Smithies (ed.), *Witnesses to a Revolution*, 5-34, esp. 13. The author claimed that King Narai declared his daughter Queen, and whichever uncle she were to marry would succeed him.

¹⁴ VOC 1453, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 5 Dec. 1688, fo. 250^r.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, fo. 250^{r-v}.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, fo. 247^r.

¹⁷ 'Succinct Account 1688', 132. This was the first time that the Dutch mentioned the Siamese court seizing Eurasian children as a means to punish the Europeans in Ayutthaya. I cannot confirm that this was the first time in Ayutthaya's history and that it was Phetracha's innovation. In the course of the eighteenth century, the Dutch were to face

this punitive measure a few times. It is not impossible that Keijts attempted to save these mestizo children, not just for the sake of humanity, because the VOC was usually anxious about guarding Eurasian children from local influence: being brought up with the 'heathen' belief. Despite the rivalry between the European nations, the Europeans in Asia shared a common identity in the Christian faith which distinguished them from the Asian adherents of indigenous religions.

¹⁸ Ibid. 129.

¹⁹ Ibid. 130.

²⁰ Jean Rival, 'Deposition Made on 18 July 1688 (by Coun Rot?) Living in Ligor, Sent on 25 September 1691', in Smithies (ed.), *Witnesses to a Revolution*, 169-75, esp. 171. Smithies considers the deposition an unsupported concoction of Rival, the French Governor of Takuapa (nearby Phuket) during King Narai's reign. Brochebourde, being a French Huguenot and working for the Dutch, must have been regarded as a traitor and hated by the French.

²¹ Anonymous, 'An Account of What Occurred in Louvo in the Kingdom of Siam, and a Summary of What Occurred in Bangkok during the Siege in 1688', in Smithies (ed.), *Witnesses to a Revolution*, 94-123, esp. 108.

²² VOC 1453, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 5 Dec. 1688, fo. 247^r.

²³ 'Succinct Account 1688', 132.

²⁴ The English subjects imprisoned as a result of the war between Siam and the EIC in 1687 were released during the coronation of King Phetracha as an act of merit performed on an auspicious occasion. Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 34.

²⁵ The original text of the treaty signed on 14 November 1688 appears in *Corpus Diplomaticum*, III, 473-9.

²⁶ VOC 1456, Rapport Keijts, 14 Feb. 1689, fos. 1998^r, 1999^v, 2001^r-2002^r.

²⁷ VOC 1456, Missive Van den Hoorn to Batavia, 10 Jan. 1689, fo. 1963^v.

²⁸ VOC 1456, Translaet Maleijts missive van den Coningh in Siam aen haer hoogh Eds. tot Batavia [Translation of a Malay letter from [the *Phrakhlang* in the name of] the King of Siam to Their Honours in Batavia], 10 Feb. 1689, fos. 1964^v-1965^v.

²⁹ Desfarges and his force sailed from Pondicherry to Phuket hoping to intimidate the Thai into compensating the French losses with tin. Achieving nothing, he finally withdrew and released the Thai hostages taken during the French withdrawal from Ayutthaya in 1688. Michael Smithies doubts whether Desfarges ever reached Phuket. Michael Smithies, *A Resounding Failure: Martin and the French in Siam, 1672-1693* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1998), 122. But according to the Dutch, King Phetracha was informed that the French ships had appeared off the island.

³⁰ VOC 1458, Dagregister Van den Hoorn, 20 Aug. 1689, fos. 593^v-594^r.

³¹ Ibid., 27 & 28 Sept. 1689, fo. 622^{r-v}; 2 Dec. 1689, fo. 638^{r-v}.

³² Ibid., 3 Feb. 1689, fo. 480^r.

³³ Ten Brummelhuis has mistakenly attributed the following list of goods for 1688 to King Phetracha: a smith's bellows, Hindustani medicines, Dutch painted tiles, Persian wine, various Dutch foodstuffs, and the like. Ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat*, 41. The order was made sometime in the last months of King Narai's reign. See VOC 1453, Missive van den Oja Berquelangh tot Siam [Letter from Okya *Phrakhlang* in Siam], 18 Jan. 1688, fo. 236^{r-v}.

³⁴ VOC 1456, Rapport Keijts, 14 Feb. 1689, fo. 2002^v.

³⁵ For example, VOC 1580, Memorie der geschenken welke geoordeelt wierden den coning en Oija Berquelangh voor den jaare 1696 te zullen aengenaam sijn [List of gifts which were considered agreeable for the King and Okya *Phrakhlang* for the year 1696], fos. 49-51; Missive Thomas van Son to Batavia, 17 Feb. 1697, fo. 267; *Generale missiven*, V: 1686-1697, 27 Dec. 1688, 217; Ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat*, 41.

³⁶ VOC 1458, Dagregister Van den Hoorn, 26 Aug. 1689, fo. 601^r.

³⁷ Dhiravat, 'Shift to Isolation', 44-5; see also Chapter One, 22.

³⁸ Raben, 'King Phetracha', 3.

³⁹ Smithies, *A Resounding Failure*, 134-6, 136 (citation).

⁴⁰ For Tachard's last mission to Siam, see Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam*, 182-4; Van

der Cruysse, *Siam and the West*, 472-4; Michael Smithies, 'Tachard's Last Appearance in Ayutthaya, 1699', *JRAS Series 3*, 12/1 (2002), 67-78. The Dutch heard that the priest requested, in the name of his King, that the French be allowed to build a fort in Tenasserim and a factory in Phetburi as King Narai had promised. Instead the Siamese court demanded that the French pay their debts before they be allowed to re-establish a lodge in Siam. VOC 1623, Missive Tant to Batavia, 24 Dec. 1699, fo. 3.

⁴¹ VOC 1623, Missive Tant to Batavia, 6 Jan. 1699, fos. 8-9; 25 Jan. 1699, fo. 27; 25 Dec. 1699, fos. 38-9.

⁴² See also Chapter Two, 52-3.

⁴³ VOC 1676, Missive Tant to Batavia, 29 Jan. 1703, fo. 39. This minister replaced Okya Mamath (Maha Amath), the favourite and distant relative of the King.

⁴⁴ VOC 1623, Missive Tant to Batavia, 6 Jan. 1699, fo. 6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, fos. 12, 27.

⁴⁶ VOC 1458, Dagregister Van den Hoorn, 11 Jan.-31 Oct. 1689.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 19 Mar. 1689, fo. 506^r.

⁴⁸ *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 326-7.

⁴⁹ VOC 1458, Dagregister Van den Hoorn, 4 Mar. 1689, fos. 500^v-501^r, 24 & 25 Apr. 1689, fos. 533^v-534^r.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 25 Apr. 1689, fos. 534^v-535^v.

⁵¹ The Thai chronicles state that many districts in Saraburi and Lopburi were deserted because those implicated in the uprising fled into the jungle for fear of punishment. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 327.

⁵² VOC 1458, Dagregister Van den Hoorn, 28 Apr. 1689, fos. 535^v-537^r; 30 Apr. 1689, fos. 537^v-538^r.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4 May 1689, fos. 540^v-541^r.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 4 June 1689, fo. 559^v. Kaempfer certainly based his short description of this event, which occurred before his visit to Ayutthaya in 1690, on Van den Hoorn's experience. Engelbert Kaempfer, *A Description of the Kingdom of Siam 1690* (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 1998), 37.

⁵⁵ VOC 1458, Dagregister Van den Hoorn, 12 Mar. 1689, fos. 502^v-503^r; 23 May 1689, fo. 553^v.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 12 June 1689, fo. 563^v.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 28 Jan. 1689, fo. 475^v; 16 Feb. 1689, fo. 489^v.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3 May 1689, fo. 540^{r-v}.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 27 Aug. 1689, fo. 601^r.

⁶⁰ Dhiravat, 'The Prasatthong Dynasty', 450-1; Kaempfer, *A Description of the Kingdom of Siam*, 23-4.

⁶¹ Kaempfer, *A Description of the Kingdom of Siam*, 38.

⁶² VOC 1456, Rapport Keijts, 14 Feb. 1689, fo. 2002^v; VOC 1458, Dagregister Van den Hoorn, 29 Jan. 1689, fo. 477^v; 14 & 15 Jan. 1689, fo. 462^r.

⁶³ VOC 1498, Missive Van den Hoorn to Batavia, 5 Nov. 1691, fos. 263^r-265^r, 273^{r-v}.

⁶⁴ For example, *Opperhoofd* Cleur recommended handing in a petition to King Süa *en passant* to complain about the behaviour of the *Phrakhleng*. VOC 1728, Berigt van Cleur, 6 juni 1705-3 februari 1706 [Report by Cleur, 6 June 1705-3 February 1706], 12 June 1706, fo. 132.

⁶⁵ For example, in 1692, King Phetracha fitted out four junks to Japan, one to Canton, and one to Batavia. See Raben, 'King Phetracha', 12.

⁶⁶ VOC 1536, Missive Thomas van Son to Batavia, 27 Nov. 1693, fo. 107^v. It is not clear which 'treason and conspiracy' Van Son meant here.

⁶⁷ VOC 1517, Missive Van Son to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1692, fos. 356^r-361^v, 364^r.

⁶⁸ VOC 1536, Missive Van Son to Batavia, 27 Nov. 1693, fo. 107^{r-v}.

⁶⁹ In 1688, Keijts reported that Cambodia had asked naval assistance of Ayutthaya (probably also to fight against the pirates) but the Siamese court refused, because Phaulkon, even after his death, left as his legacy a policy of keeping Cambodia weak. De Choisy also mentioned that King Narai had discussed the Cambodian problem with Phaulkon. Undoubtedly, this policy had always been part of Ayutthaya-Cambodia relations. VOC 1453, Missive Keijts to Batavia, 5 Dec. 1688, fo. 251^v; Choisy, *Journal of a*

Voyage to Siam, 205.

⁷⁰ Ayutthaya's royal chronicles mention only that King Phetracha sent some officials to collect the albino elephant which Cambodia had found and offered to him and not that the animal became a part of a political game between the two states. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 325-6, 357-8.

⁷¹ VOC 1609, Eenige agter een geschreven extracten uijt het dagregister gehouden in Siam in de maend dec. 1697 en jan. 1698 raeckende den oorlog tusschen de Siammers en die van Cambodia [Something according to a written extract from the journal notes kept in Siam in the months of December 1697 and January 1698 regarding the war between the Siamese and the Cambodians], Reinier Boom, 1 & 2 Jan. 1698, fos. 5-7; Missive Boom to Batavia, 5 Dec. 1698, fo. 12.

⁷² VOC 1609, Missive Boom to Batavia, 5 Dec. 1698, fo. 22.

⁷³ *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 358-60.

⁷⁴ VOC 1637, Missive Tant to Batavia, 17 Jan. 1700, fo. 12.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, fos. 8-9.

⁷⁶ VOC 1623, Missive Tant to Batavia, 20 Dec. 1699, Appendix, 25 Dec. 1699, fo. 67. French sources describe King Phetracha as the shaper and manipulator of the events. He was thought to have used the unrest as an excuse to eliminate the old *khunnang* group, which he considered to pose a threat to his chosen heir, Phra Khwan. It can be said that the Dutch saw the Nakhon Ratchasima rebellion as the cause and the French considered it a pretext for a purge of the leading officials. For a comparison of Dutch and French sources regarding the purge of 1699, see Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'Dutch and French Evidence Concerning Court Conflicts at the End of King Phetracha's Reign, c. 1699-1703', *Silpakorn University International Journal*, 2/1 (Jan.-June 2002), 47-70.

⁷⁷ VOC 1623, Missive Tant to Batavia, 20 Dec. 1699, fo. 62.

⁷⁸ VOC 1609, Missive Boom to Batavia, 5 Dec. 1698, fo. 23.

⁷⁹ M. C. Ricklefs, *The Seen and Unseen Worlds in Java, 1726-49* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 8; Clara Brakel-Papenhuijzen, *The bedhaya Court Dances of Central Java* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

⁸⁰ VOC 1676, Missive Tant to Batavia, 29 Jan. 1703, fos. 61, 63. As was his father, Sorasak, when ruling as King Süa, was very much interested in exotic performance art. In 1705 his court asked the VOC for fifteen to twenty 'cuffers' (black slaves from Eastern Africa) who could play the trumpet. When Batavia answered that they had none, the Siamese claimed that there used to be one or two in the Company lodge at Ayutthaya. They even wanted to borrow one of these men to train young musicians at court. VOC 1711, Translaat Maleitse Missive van den *Phrakblang* aan Haar Eds. de Hoge Regering tot Batavia [Translation of a Malay letter from the *Phrakblang* to Their Honours the High Government in Batavia], received 25 Nov. 1705, fos. 114-15.

⁸¹ VOC 1637, Missive Tant to Batavia, 16 Nov. 1700, fo. 26^v.

⁸² *Generale missiven*, VI: 1698-1713, 17 Feb. 1701, 152.

⁸³ VOC 1623, Missive Tant to Batavia, 25 Dec. 1699, fos. 39-40, 56. A French source dates his death to mid-1700. See Dirk van der Cruysse, 'Introduction', in id. (ed.), *The Diary of Kosa Pan: Thai Ambassador to France June-July 1686* (Chiang Mai: Silk Worm Books, 2002), 1-26, esp. 25.

⁸⁴ VOC 1637, Missive Tant to Batavia, 17 Jan. 1700, fo. 12.

⁸⁵ VOC 1648, Missive Tant to Batavia, 28 Dec. 1700, fo. 24. Tant wrote that Okya Maha Amath replaced Chao Phraya Thammasena, who had served in this post for nine months (after Kosa Pan) before being dismissed on account of his old age.

⁸⁶ VOC 1637, Missive Tant to Batavia, 16 Nov. 1700, fo. 26^v; 28 Dec. 1700, fo. 29^v.

⁸⁷ Raben, 'King Phetracha', 12.

⁸⁸ VOC 1637, Missive Tant to Batavia, 28 Dec. 1700, fo. 59^r.

⁸⁹ VOC 1648, Missive Tant to Batavia, 24 Nov. 1700, fo. 17.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4 Feb. 1701, fos. 104, 109.

⁹¹ VOC 1623, Missive Tant to Batavia, 20 Dec. 1699, Appendix, 25 Dec. 1699, fo. 67.

⁹² VOC 1637, Missive Tant to Batavia, 28 Dec. 1700, fo. 60^v.

⁹³ VOC 1676, Missive Tant to Batavia, 29 Jan. 1703, fos. 58-9.

⁹⁴ Dhiravat, 'Dutch and French Evidence', 50.

⁹⁵ VOC 1676, Missive Tant to Batavia, 29 Jan. 1703, fo. 59.

⁹⁶ Dhiravat, 'Dutch and French Evidence', 49.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 55-6.

⁹⁸ VOC 1580, Missive Van Son to Batavia, 27 Nov. 1696, fo. 204. Thai chronicles also mention this preference of King Sūa, besides other flaws in his character, such as cruelty and excessive drinking. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 391.

⁹⁹ VOC 1609, Dagregister Boom, 4 Dec. 1697, fo. 4. During King Narai's reign, a sister of the then Okphra Phetracha who was a royal consort had caused scandals because of her recurrent 'visits' to the Portuguese camp. She eventually seduced Chaofa Noi, and ruined both herself and him when their affair was exposed. She was condemned to death, while he was handicapped as a result of a severe flogging, which was tantamount to political assassination—he lost Narai's favour and a chance to contend for the throne. De Bèze, who mentioned this episode, believed that Chaofa Noi's betrayal caused King Narai to turn his attachment to Phra Pi. De Bèze, *1688 Revolution in Siam*, 53-7.

¹⁰⁰ VOC 1580, Missive Van Son to Batavia, 27 Nov. 1696, fos. 204-5.

¹⁰¹ VOC 1623, Missive Tant to Batavia, 25 Dec. 1699, fos. 61-3.

¹⁰² VOC 1676, Missive Tant to Batavia, 29 Jan. 1703, fo. 60. According to the Thai chronicles, King Ong Wiet of Vientiane presented his fifteen-year-old daughter, Phra Kaew Fa, to King Phetracha in gratitude for Ayutthaya's aid against the attack from Luang Prabang in 1701. The Princess, however, became one of Sorasak's consorts. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 363-5.

¹⁰³ VOC 1676, Missive Tant to Batavia, 29 Jan. 1703, fos. 59-60.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 8 Feb. 1703, fos. 100-1.

¹⁰⁵ VOC 1691, Relaas van 't voorgevallene by de ziekte en overlyden van den Siamse koning Phra Trong Than genaamt [Relation of What Occurred upon the Sickness and Death of the Siamese King Named Phra Trong Than], (1703 or 1704), fos. 61-74.

¹⁰⁶ Dhiravat, 'Princes, Pretenders, and the Chinese Phrakhleng', 107-30.

¹⁰⁷ VOC 1676, Missive Tant to Batavia, 8 Feb. 1703, fos. 100-3.

¹⁰⁸ De Chaumont, who visited the Ayutthayan court in 1685-6, wrote that Kromluang Yothathap, or the 'Princess-Queen', exercised her own justice in her own household, and that she was 'inclinable [inclined] to great severities'. When her servants had been proved guilty of great slanders, or revealing important secrets, she had their mouths sewn up. Chaumont, *Aspects of the Embassy to Siam 1685*, 106-7.

¹⁰⁹ This tale occurs only in Cleur's 'Relation'.

¹¹⁰ VOC 1676, Missive Tant to Batavia, 8 Feb. 1703, fo. 42. Some of the commercial disputes during this period resulted from the differences between the Thai and Dutch versions of the 1688 Treaty concerning the clause about the tin trade. According to the Dutch, the VOC had an exclusive right to tin and granted the Siamese King only what he needed for daily use (constructing temples and buildings). The Thai text read that the King owned all tin and only what he did not need was to be sold to the VOC exclusively. See Ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat*, 45.

¹¹¹ VOC 1711, Bericht van den oppercoopman en voormaels gewesen opperhoofd in Siam Gideon Tant aen haer Eds. de hoge regeringe tot Batavia overgelevert dato 20 Maert 1705, sprekende van den slechten toestand van Compagnies negotie aldaer, mitsgaders op hoedanige wijze na zijn gevoelen sulx bij den vorst van dat rijk en desselfs hoge ministers ten besten zouden kunnen werden verholpen [Report by *Opferkoopman* and former *Opferhoofd* in Siam Gideon Tant delivered to Their Honours the High Government in Batavia on 20 March 1705, speaking of the poor state of the Company's business there, and how according to him it could best be improved with the ruler of that kingdom and his high ministers], fos. 15-17.

¹¹² VOC 1728, Berigt aan den Gouverneur Generaal van 't voorvallen in Siam, 6 juni anno passado tot 3 februari jongstleden over 't opbreken van't nederlants comptoir ... en hoedanig die op de honorabelste wyse aldaar kan herstelt werden [Report to the Governor General on the situation in Siam, 6 June last year [1705] to 3 February [1706] about the closing of the Dutch *comptoir* ... and how it can be restored in the most honourable way], Arnout Cleur, 7 May 1706, fo. 116.

¹¹³ VOC 1728, Jan van Velsen to Batavia, 17 Mar. 1706, fos. 39-41.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., fos. 11-12.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., fos. 42-6. See also Chapter Two, 53.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., fos. 58-9.

¹¹⁷ VOC 1759, Missive *Phrakhlang* to Batavia, (1707 or 1708), fo. 29.

¹¹⁸ *Generale missiven*, VI: 1698-1713, 31 Mar. 1706, 392, 406.

¹¹⁹ In 1691, King Phetracha employed a Christian native of Siam, Vincent Pinheiro, as his envoy to visit the French in Pondicherry. In 1706, King Sūa appointed a local Portuguese, Jan Domingos de Matto, as envoy to negotiate with the English in Madras. VOC 1719, Missive Cleur to Batavia, 22 Oct. 1706, fo. 1837. The descendants of Daniel Brochebourde also remained in royal service.

¹²⁰ VOC 1776, Missive Cleur to Batavia, 29 Jan. 1709, fo. 9. Cleur was one of the *Opperhoofden* who enjoyed the court's favour. When he died in early 1712, some important officials were sent to attend his funeral. VOC 1827, Missive Willem de Bevere to Batavia, 25 Feb. 1712, fo. 17-18.

Notes to Chapter Seven

¹ Wyatt, *Thailand*, 129. The social and political organization, including the pattern of monarchy and royal traditions, developed during the Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty was the model for the first kings of the Bangkok Period. See Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 9.

² Wyatt, *Thailand*, 130-2.

³ The Thai chronicles report, for example, an accident with the elephant King Sūa was riding during an elephant-hunting trip in 1708, which aroused his suspicion that his sons, Chaofa Phet and Chaofa Phon (later Kings Thaisa and Borommakot), might be plotting against him. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 386-9. French missionaries in Ayutthaya also mentioned that the King placed little trust in his sons and often had them flogged. Archives de la Société des Missions Étrangères, De Cicé to Directors, Vol. 863, 6 Oct. 1703, 521, mentioned in Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 53.

⁴ The Dutch reported that the *Phrakhlang* was arrested on 12 October 1706 for having given the annual gifts to the King's cousin or nephew (referred to as *neef* in the report) who had been apprehended for treason on 30 September. VOC 1743, Missive Aernout Cleur to Batavia, 18 Feb. 1707, fo. 53. This was probably Phra Phichaisurin, who was a nephew of King Phetracha and thus a cousin of King Sūa. The Thai chronicles relate that Phetracha was so upset by Sorasak's killing of Phra Khwan that he named Phichaisurin his successor. The latter, however, refused the throne and begged Sorasak to accept it. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 377.

⁵ VOC 1827, Missive D. Blom and De Bevere to Batavia, 30 Dec. 1712, fo. 23; VOC 1841, Missive D. Blom to Batavia, 15 Dec. 1713, fo. 35; VOC 1841, Missive *Phrakhlang* to Batavia, 1713, fos. 61-2.

⁶ VOC 1827, Missive De Bevere to Batavia, 25 Feb. 1712, fo. 19; Missive D. Blom and De Bevere to Batavia, 30 Dec. 1712, fos. 18-19; VOC 1841, Missive D. Blom to Batavia, 15 Dec. 1713, fos. 35-6.

⁷ VOC 1862, Missive D. Blom to Batavia, 10 Dec. 1715, fo. 2390^v; *Generale missiven*, VII: 1713-1725, 19 Feb. 1716, 219; 23 Mar. 1717, 281.

⁸ VOC 1862, Missive D. Blom to Batavia, 10 Dec. 1715, fo. 2387^v.

⁹ VOC 1926, Missive W. Blom to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1719, fos. 28-62. This document includes details of the Spanish embassy (such as lists of the entourage and gifts), correspondence between Ayutthaya and Manila, and the proposed contract by the Spanish, but no description of how the embassy was received at court.

¹⁰ VOC 1883, Missive D. Blom to Batavia, 26 Jan. 1716, fos. 86-91. Blom gave some details about how the ceremony was arranged and how the Dutch were excellently treated during this one-day feast.

¹¹ VOC 1841, Missive D. Blom to Batavia, 30 Jan. 1714, fo. 50.

¹² VOC 2239, Missive Pieter Sijen to Batavia, 25 Nov. 1732, fos. 40-1.

¹³ Ibid., fo. 43; Missive Sijen to Batavia, 31 Dec. 1732, fo. 9.

¹⁴ VOC 2286, Missive Sijen to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1733, fos. 1-3; *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 413, 416-8.

¹⁵ VOC 2286, Missive Sijen to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1733, fos. 1-3; 26 Feb. 1733, fo. 5; 30 Nov. 1733, fo. 41.

¹⁶ VOC 2286, Missive Sijen to Batavia, 31 Jan. 1733, fos. 1-4; 26 Feb. 1733, fos. 4-6; 30 Nov. 1733, fo. 41. *See also* Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 78-81; Raben and Dhiravat, 'Tipping Balances', 67. A short account of the Chinese rebellion in 1734 is given in *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 437-8. For the rise and fall of the Chinese *Phrakhlang*, *see* Dhiravat, 'Princes, Pretenders and the Chinese Phrakhlang'.

¹⁷ Wyatt, 'King Borommakot', 55; Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 283-7.

¹⁸ Raben and Dhiravat, 'Tipping Balances', 68.

¹⁹ *Generale missiven*, IX: 1729-1737, 8 Dec. 1732, 376; 1 Feb. 1733, 431; 31 Oct. 1733, 493.

²⁰ VOC 2383, Missive *Phrakhlang* to Batavia, 19 Apr. 1736, fo. 201; VOC 2534, Missive *Phrakhlang* to Batavia, received 2 June 1741, fo. 355.

²¹ VOC 2383, Missive Van den Heuvel to Batavia, 14 Jan. 1737, fo. 12.

²² VOC 2438, Missive Van den Heuvel to Batavia, 25 Jan. 1738, fos. 48-9.

²³ VOC 2383, Missive Van den Heuvel to Batavia, 25 Jan. 1736, fo. 19. *See also* Raben and Dhiravat, 'Tipping Balances', 68.

²⁴ VOC 2383, Missive Van den Heuvel to Batavia, 25 Jan. 1736, fos. 37-8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, fo. 19.

²⁶ In 1746, a person called the 'Eminent Som' gathered people in Lopburi to rebel but they were put down by some three hundred soldiers. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 443.

²⁷ Raben and Dhiravat, 'Tipping Balances', 68, 71, 72.

²⁸ VOC 2383, Missive Van den Heuvel to Batavia, 25 Jan. 1736, fos. 20-5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 13 Jan. 1737, fos. 15-16.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 14 Jan. 1737, fos. 7-9.

³¹ VOC 2438, Missive Meyboom to Van den Heuvel, 14 Feb. 1737, fos. 63-6.

³² VOC 2193, Dagregister Van Alderwereld, 17, 23 & 26 Apr. 1730, fos. 26-8.

³³ Raben and Dhiravat, 'Tipping Balances', 63.

³⁴ VOC 2410, Missive Van den Heuvel to Batavia, 20 Apr. 1737, fo. 7.

³⁵ Theodorus Jacobus van den Heuvel, 'A Journey to Phra Phutthabat, 1737', tr. S. A. W. Mottau and Remco Raben, in Raben and Dhiravat (eds.), *In the King's Trail*, 11-41.

³⁶ Van den Heuvel, 'A Journey to Phra Phutthabat', 16-17.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 18.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 20.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 19-20, 24.

⁴⁰ VOC 2193, Dagregister Van Alderwereld, 14 Oct. 1730, fos. 50-1; Adrien Launay, *Histoire de la mission de Siam*, Documents historiques, II: 1696-1811 (repr., Paris: Missions Étrangères de Paris, 2000), 129-31.

⁴¹ Van den Heuvel, 'A Journey to Phra Phutthabat', 30-1. On another occasion, in 1732, the Dutch reported that a rumour that the Buddha image at Wat Phanachoeng was sweating blood had spread throughout the whole kingdom and had caused confusion 'among these blind heathens, among the grandees as well as the commoners'. *Opperhoofd* Pieter Sijen understood that the Siamese considered this phenomenon a bad omen. Yet, he categorically rejected the idea as superstitious and explained it in scientific terms instead. The Dutch believed that the 'blood' was the result of the brownish-red varnish made from *namrak* which covered the Buddha's statue (underneath the gold layer) reacting with the water used in cleaning the image. Probably, it disturbed the Dutch merchants even more that King Thaisa forbade any business transactions and ordered his subjects to allocate their resources instead of worshipping the image, in the hope of improving the fortune of the kingdom. VOC 2239, Dagregister Sijen, 16 Apr. 1732, fos. 33-4. This journal has been published in paraphrase and partially translated in Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'The Last Year of King Thaisa's Reign: Data Concerning Politics and Society from the Dutch East India Company's Siam Factory *Dagregister* for 1732', in Vinai Pongsripian (ed.), *kwam yok yon kong adeet/The Wilderness of the Past* (Bangkok: 1994),

125-45.

⁴² VOC 2438, Dagregister Van den Heuvel, 28 & 29 Jan. 1738, fos. 502-9. Van den Heuvel's short report of this royal cremation should be read as a complement to the passage on the cremation of King Prasatthong's daughter in February 1650 by Jan Struys. Struys came to Ayutthaya in that year in the service of the VOC. Although some parts of his account (first published in Dutch in 1676) regarding other aspects of Siam invite suspicion, his and Van den Heuvel's descriptions of the royal cremations rather agree with each other on several points. Struys emphasizes that people, especially women, were obliged to express or even 'feign' their sorrow throughout the ceremony. Michael Smithies (ed.), 'The Perillous and most Unhappy Voyages of John Struys ...', translated by John Morrison, London 1683', *JSS* 94 (2006), 177-209, esp. 196-8.

⁴³ VOC 2438, Missive Van den Heuvel to Batavia, 25 Jan. 1738, fo. 49.

⁴⁴ VOC 2410, Missive Van den Heuvel to Batavia, 25 Jan. 1738, fos. 9-13, fos. 18-23; VOC 2438, Dagregister Van den Heuvel, 10 Nov. 1738, fo. 580; 14 Nov. 1738, fo. 581.

⁴⁵ VOC 2534, Dagregister Willem de Ghij, 5 Sept. 1740, fos. 170-1; 13 Sept. 1740, fo. 176.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 13 Dec. 1740, fo. 205; 31 Dec. 1740, fo. 210; 8 Jan. 1741, fo. 221.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 29 Jan. 1741, fo. 227; 10 Feb. 1741, fos. 251-3; 11 Feb. 1741, fo. 258.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 11 Feb. 1741, fos. 253-7.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 12 Feb. 1741, fos. 263-4.

⁵⁰ *Realia: Register op de generale resolutiën van het Kasteel Batavia, 1632-1805* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1886), III, 204.

⁵¹ Van den Heuvel, 'A Journey to Phra Phutthabat', 13.

⁵² VOC 2438, Missive Van den Heuvel to Batavia, 25 Jan. 1738, fos. 45-7.

⁵³ Van den Heuvel, 'A Journey to Phra Phutthabat', 21.

⁵⁴ Chao Phraya Chamnan Borirak was made the *Phrakhlāng* and Chao Phraya Maha Uparat at the same time. The latter title was not a princely one but the person in this capacity was treated with the honour due to a prince; that may explain the Dutch nomination of this official as the 'under-king' (*onderkoning*). For Chao Phraya Chamnan Borirak, see Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 248.

⁵⁵ VOC 2534, Dagregister De Ghij, February 1740, fos. 134-41; April 1740, fos. 148-50; 27 Sept. 1740, fo. 181.

⁵⁶ VOC 1945, Memorie W. Blom, 22 Dec. 1720, fos. 64-5.

⁵⁷ VOC 2741, Missive Nicolaas Bang to Batavia, 10 Jan. 1749, fos. 27-8.

⁵⁸ From now on the head of the VOC factory in Ayutthaya was designated by this title.

⁵⁹ VOC 2781, Missive Bang to Batavia, 15 Jan. 1751, fos. 14-15.

⁶⁰ VOC 2934, Missive Bang to Batavia, 25 Jan. 1758, fo. 15; Missive *Phrakhlāng* to Batavia, 1757/8, fo. 34.

⁶¹ VOC 2934, Missive Bang to Batavia, 25 Jan. 1758, fos. 5-8; 9 Feb. 1759, fo. 10.

⁶² VOC 2965, Missive Bang to Batavia, 9 Feb. 1759, fos. 1-3, 10-11, 16; VOC 3024, Missive *Phrakhlāng* to Batavia, received 1 Dec. 1761, fo. 31.

⁶³ Sri Vijaya Rajasimha ascended the Kandyan throne on the grounds that he was the younger brother of the queen of King Narendrasimha, who died without a legitimate heir. Likewise, his brother-in-law, Kirti Sri Rajasimha, succeeded him as another Hindu-Nayakkar King of Kandy. They both formally embraced Buddhism to win the support of the Buddhist Sri Lankans. For a short history of the development of Buddhism in Ceylon—including the explanation for its 'decline'—up to the Kandy Period, see Kitsiri Malaloda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society 1750-1900: A Study of Religious Revival and Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 'Chapter I: Background', 11-69.

⁶⁴ Malaloda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 61-4; Lorna Dewaraja, 'Thailand's Sublime Gift to Sri Lanka: the Services Rendered by Upali Maha Thera and his Associates', *JRASSL* NS 48 (1996), 91-110; Lodewijk Wagenaar, 'The Arrival of Buddhist Monks from Siam in 1753. Mid-eighteenth Century Religious Contacts between Kandy and Siam, as Recorded by the Dutch East India Company', paper given at the Seminar *Crossroads of Thai and Dutch History*, National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, 9-11 September 2004.

⁶⁵ K. W. Goonewardena, 'Ayutthaya in the Twilight Years and Its Triangular Relation with the V.O.C. and Sri Lanka', *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, VI/1-2 (1980),

1-47, esp. 10, 12. Contrary to Goonewardena's suspicion, Abraham Arnouts had indeed served in Siam as the commissioner of the VOC ship to Ayutthaya in 1743.

⁶⁶ VOC 2718, Missive Gerrit Fek and Bang to Batavia, 27 Jan. 1748, fos. 47-8.

⁶⁷ Goonewardena, 'Ayutthaya in the Twilight Years', 14-15.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 20.

⁶⁹ VOC 2718, Missive Fek and Bang to Batavia, 28 Dec. 1747, fos. 31-2; Missive Fek and Bang to Batavia, 27 Jan. 1748, fo. 51.

⁷⁰ VOC 2718, Missive Fek to Batavia, 15 Nov. 1747, fos. 4^v-6^r; Goonewardena, 'Ayutthaya in the Twilight Years', 17.

⁷¹ Goonewardena, 'Ayutthaya in the Twilight Years', 20-1, 22.

⁷² Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 61-4; Goonewardena, 'Ayutthaya in the Twilight Years', 21-2.

⁷³ Goonewardena, 'Ayutthaya in the Twilight Years', 15, 17-18.

⁷⁴ VOC 2718, Missive Fek to Batavia, 15 Nov. 1747, fos. 7^v-8^v; Missive Fek and Bang to Batavia, 27 Jan. 1748, fos. 48-9; *Generale missiven*, XI: 1743-1750, 31 Dec. 1748, 655.

⁷⁵ For a description of the reception of the embassy in Ayutthaya by the Kandyan Ambassador, see P. E. Pieris, 'An Account of King Kirti Sri's Embassy to Siam in 1672 Saka (1750 A.D.)', *JRASSL* NS 48 (1996), 111-48, esp. 118.

⁷⁶ VOC 2781, Missive Bang to Batavia, 22 Nov. 1751, fos. 49-55; Missive Bang to Batavia, 18 Dec. 1751, fo. 8.

⁷⁷ For a detailed study of this journey, see Wagenaar, 'The Arrival of Buddhist Monks'.

⁷⁸ Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 62.

⁷⁹ Wagenaar, 'The Arrival of Buddhist Monks', 20.

⁸⁰ Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 83-4, 167-8, 178.

⁸¹ VOC 2860, Missive Bang to Batavia, 15 Dec. 1754, fo. 16; VOC 2883, Missive Bang to Batavia, 15 Jan. 1756, fo. 26.

⁸² Saichon, 'setthakit lae sangkom thai nai samai plai ayutthaya', 14-18.

⁸³ *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 428-9, 432-3; see also Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 89-90.

⁸⁴ Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 101-2.

⁸⁵ *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 454-7.

⁸⁶ VOC 2883, Missive Bang to Batavia, 8 Jan. 1757, fos. 14-18.

⁸⁷ Sunthonthep resided at Wang Sa Kaew (the Residence of the Crystal Pool). *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 455, 463.

⁸⁸ VOC 2883, Missive Bang to Batavia, 8 Jan. 1757, fos. 14-15.

⁸⁹ Ibid., fos. 15-17.

⁹⁰ Ibid., fos. 17-18.

⁹¹ VOC 2965, Missive Bang to Batavia, 9 Feb. 1759, fo. 8.

⁹² *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 458-9. Busakorn has suggested that Borommakot's alleged statement should not be taken at its face value because its source, the *Phra Racha Phongsawadan Chabab Phra Racha Hattalekha* (the Royal Autograph version), was composed by the political elite of the Bangkok Period which sought not least to blame King Ekathat for the fall of Ayutthaya. See Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 104.

⁹³ VOC 2965, Missive Bang to Batavia, 9 Feb. 1759, fo. 8.

⁹⁴ The granting of royal amnesty to prisoners on auspicious occasions was a persistent tradition and is still practised in Thailand. Van Vliet, for example, had mentioned this practice on the occasion of King Chetthathirat's enthronement in 1628. Van Vliet, 'Historical Account', 264.

⁹⁵ Thai sources mention that King Borommakot ordered Ekathat to be ordained to prevent him from contending the throne. The French also wrote that Ekathat was suffering from leprosy. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 459; Launay, *Histoire de la mission de Siam* II, 208.

⁹⁶ VOC 2965, Missive Bang to Batavia, 9 Feb. 1759, fo. 9; Launay, *Histoire de la mission de Siam* II, 208.

⁹⁷ VOC 3032, Missive Huysvoorn to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1762, fo. 1373^v.

⁹⁸ VOC 2965, Missive Bang to Batavia, 9 Feb. 1759, fo. 9.

⁹⁹ Ibid., fo. 8; VOC 3032, Missive Huysvoorn to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1762, fo. 1372^v.

¹⁰⁰ *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 463-5.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 466-7; VOC 2965, Missive Bang to Batavia, 9 Feb. 1759, fo. 9; VOC 3032, Missive Huysvoorn to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1762, fo. 1372^v.

¹⁰² See also Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 108-9.

¹⁰³ VOC 2965, Missive Bang to Batavia, 9 Feb. 1759, fo. 17; VOC 3032, Missive Huysvoorn to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1762, fo. 1373^v.

¹⁰⁴ *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 468-9; Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 112.

¹⁰⁵ Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 222.

¹⁰⁶ VOC 2965, Missive Bang to Batavia, 9 Feb. 1759, fo. 17.

¹⁰⁷ VOC 2991, Missive Beerendrecht to Batavia, 30 Nov. 1760, fo. 17.

¹⁰⁸ VOC 3032, Missive Huysvoorn to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1762, fo. 1375^t.

¹⁰⁹ There are different versions in Burmese, Thai and English sources about the reason of Alaungpaya's retreat, as summarized by Helen James, 'The Fall of Ayutthaya: A Re-assessment', *Journal of Burma Studies*, 5 (2000), 75-108, esp. 88-9.

¹¹⁰ VOC 3032, Missive Huysvoorn to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1762, fos. 1375^v-1376^v.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, fo. 1377^{r-v}. The French priests wrote that the 'princesses' now had as much power as King Ekathat himself and, because of their greed, they demanded confiscation of property instead of the usual death sentence for treason, murder, and fire/arson. The officials were following their example. Launay, *Histoire de la mission de Siam* II, 214.

¹¹² VOC 2991, Missive Beerendrecht to Batavia, 30 Nov. 1760, fo. 5; Missive *Phrakhlāng* to Batavia, 1760, fos. 20-1. James has identified the above-mentioned three European captives as the three Dutchmen whose release the Englishman Walter Alves tried to secure, when he was negotiating for the freedom of his own men. However, the Dutch were held back by the Burmese who believed that they could help make gunpowder. See James, 'The Fall of Ayutthaya', 85.

¹¹³ VOC 3024, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 4 Dec. 1761, fos. 4-5; VOC 3089, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 28 Jan. 1763, fos. 2-3; VOC 3152, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 28 Dec. 1764, fo. 12.

¹¹⁴ VOC 3024, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 4 Dec. 1761, fos. 6-7.

¹¹⁵ VOC 3089, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 31 Dec. 1763, fos. 20-6.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, fos. 9-11, 16-18.

¹¹⁷ VOC 3032, Missive Huysvoorn to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1762, fo. 1377^{r-v}; VOC 3089, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 31 Dec. 1763, fos. 3-7. This *Phrakhlāng* was probably the former Okya Phiphatkosa who succeeded Chao Phraya Chamnan Borirak, who was also his father-in-law. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 452.

¹¹⁸ VOC 3024, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 4 Dec. 1761, fos. 7-8.

¹¹⁹ *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 468-9; Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 112-3.

¹²⁰ VOC 2965, Missive Bang to Batavia, 9 Feb. 1759, fo. 17; VOC 3032, Missive Huysvoorn to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1762, fos. 1373^v, 1374^v; *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 468.

¹²¹ VOC 2965, Missive Bang to Batavia, 9 Feb. 1759, fo. 20.

¹²² Lorna Dewaraja, *The Kandyan Kingdom* (Colombo: Lake House Investments, 1988), 122-3, 125-6; VOC 2986, Translaat Singhalese ola relaterende het voorgevallene te Candia nopens de onderneming der Siamse priesters tegen den koning [Translation of a Sinhalese *ola* (letter) relating the events in Kandy regarding the actions of the Siamese monks against the King], 23 Aug. 1760, 1695^r-1697^r; Translaat Singhalese ola gerigt aan den dessave der Colombose ommelanden D. E. Robertus Cramer door den dessave der drie en vier Corles te Candia Doembere Ralehamy [Translation of a Sinhalese *ola* addressed to the *Dessave* of the Colombo surrounds Robertus Cramer from the *Dessave* of the Three and Four *Corles* in Kandy Doembere Ralehamy], 10 Sept. 1760, fos. 1698^r-1699^v.

¹²³ SLNA 1/4873, Secret letter, Batavia to Van Eck, 6 Aug. 1762, not foliated; Secret letter, Batavia to Van Eck, 19 Nov. 1762, not foliated, quoted in K. W. Goonewardena, 'A Dutch Mission to Tenasserim and Glimpses of the Mid-Eighteenth Century Ayutthayan Kingdom', paper given at the International Conference on Thai Studies,

Bangkok, 22-24 August 1984, 6.

¹²⁴ VOC 3032, Missive Huysvoorn to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1762, fos. 1385^r, 1386^v. The Dutch mentioned that Thepphiphit's son who had been with the Prince in Ceylon died on the return trip from Ceylon, and two other lived as 'outcasts' in the temple where Prince Uthumphon resided, and in that way were held as quasi-hostages by the court.

¹²⁵ VOC 3032, Missive Huysvoorn to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1762, fo. 1379^v.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, fo. 1378^{r-v}.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, fos. 1381^r, 1386^r, 1392^r.

¹²⁸ This point contrasts with Lorna Dewaraja's assertion (supposedly based on Sri Lankan sources) that the Kandyan plot of 1760 was supported by the Ayutthayan court. There is no evidence in either Thai or Dutch records that the Siamese King had an interest in dethroning the King of Kandy which lay beyond his political interest. It is also unlikely that King Ekathat wanted to see his renegade brother and political opponent rule another kingdom, even one so far away. See Dewaraja, *The Kandyan Kingdom*, 119-25.

¹²⁹ VOC 3032, Missive Huysvoorn to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1762, fos. 1388^r-1389^r. The Powney family was well established in Calcutta in the eighteenth century. See Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam*, 192.

¹³⁰ VOC 3032, Missive Huysvoorn to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1762, fos. 1390^r-1391^r.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, fos. 1391^v, 1392^v.

¹³² The colourful episode of Van Damast Limberger's mission to Mergui and the revealing account of Siam by De St. Joachim are presented in Goonewardena, 'A Dutch Mission to Tenasserim'. VOC 3109, Relas [Account] Fr. Manuel de St. Joachim, 14 & 18 May 1764, fos. 219^r-224^r.

¹³³ VOC 3152, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 18 Nov. 1765, fo. 15. Werndlij also mentioned that the Ayutthaya office had asked the Company to consider a withdrawal from Siam in the letters of 13 Oct. 1757, 30 Sept. 1760, and 24 Sept. 1761.

¹³⁴ VOC 3089, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 31 Dec. 1763, fos. 12-14.

¹³⁵ VOC 3089, Missive *Phrakhlung* to Batavia, 1763, fos. 16-19, 28.

¹³⁶ VOC 3032, Missive Huysvoorn to Batavia, 13 Dec. 1762, fos. 1384^v, 1387^v.

¹³⁷ VOC 3089, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 31 Dec. 1763, fos. 3-7.

¹³⁸ VOC 3152, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 28 Dec. 1764, fos. 5, 7, 40.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 15 Feb. 1765, fo. 68.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 18 Nov. 1765, fos. 4-5.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, fo. 5. English translation from Dhiravat na Pombejra, 'Fleeing the "Enemy": the Final Dutch Letter from Ayutthaya, November 1765', in Vinai Pongsripiian (ed.), *Chatusansaniyachan* (Bangkok: the Historical Commission, Ministry of Culture, 2004), 327-45, esp. 334.

¹⁴² VOC 3152, Werndlij to Batavia, 18 Nov. 1765, fo. 7.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, fo. 10.

¹⁴⁴ Wood, *A History of Siam*, 245-6; Hutchinson, *Adventurers in Siam*, 192.

¹⁴⁵ VOC 3152, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 18 Nov. 1765, fos. 13-14.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 15 Feb. 1765, fo. 68.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 18 Nov. 1765, fo. 5.

¹⁴⁸ For a (commercial) deliberation on the VOC's withdrawal from Siam in 1765, see VOC 3125, Generale missive Batavia aan Heren XVII, 20 Oct. 1765, fos. 50^v-56^v. See also Chapter One, 25.

¹⁴⁹ VOC 3152, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 18 Nov. 1765, fos. 11-12.

¹⁵⁰ According to the royal chronicles, Chaofa Cit fled with his helpers to Phitsanulok where he caused trouble and consequently was executed by the order of the city governor. *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 497-8.

¹⁵¹ VOC 3152, Missive Werndlij to Batavia, 18 Nov. 1765, fos. 12-13, 14.

¹⁵² J. J. Boeles, 'Note on an Eye-witness Account in Dutch of the Destruction of Ayudhya in 1767', *JSS* 56/1 (Jan. 1968), 101-11. The information about Anthony Goyaton invites further research. Firstly, was Batavia's description of Goyaton as the former 'head of the foreign Europeans' in Siam correct? The VOC reports from Siam at least never mention this person. If the position did exist, it was perhaps created after the departure of the VOC and the French priests to co-ordinate the remaining Europeans.

Secondly, was there any connection between Goyaton and the Armenian in Mergui mentioned by Van Damast Limberger? The Dutchman reported that the deception of De St. Joachim was revealed to him by an Armenian who was employed by the local authorities to deal with foreigners and acted as an intermediary between the Dutch and the Governor of Tenasserim in 1764. This Armenian may have been Goyaton, who probably fled to Ayutthaya after Mergui and Tenasserim had been ransacked by the Burmese at the end of 1764. Still, it would not be surprising if they were different persons because the Armenian community had long been established in Ayutthaya. De Chaumont mentioned that a great part of the sixteen families of Ayutthayan Armenians served as horsemen in King Narai's guard. Michael Smithies (ed. and tr.), *The Chevalier De Chaumont and the Abbé De Choisy: Aspects of the Embassy to Siam 1685* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1997), 84. For the Armenian intermediary in Mergui, see Goonewardena, 'Ayutthaya in the Twilight Years', 12-13, 20.

¹⁵³ For a survey of other accounts of the destruction of Ayutthaya, see James, 'The Fall of Ayutthaya', 97-100.

¹⁵⁴ Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 118. In 1766, Thepphiphit raised an army in an attempt to rescue the capital. However, he was defeated by the enemy and fled to Nakhon Ratchasima where he took over the governorship. His royal blood made him popular and his position was further strengthened when some officials escaped from Ayutthaya and joined him. After the ultimate fall of Ayutthaya in early 1767, he was invited to Phimai where he was crowned as the legitimate King of the Thai. Thepphiphit's journey and life came to an end when he was defeated by Taksin.

¹⁵⁵ Busakorn, 'The Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty', 192.

Notes to Conclusion

¹ Ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat*, 56.

² VOC 2193, *Memorie van overgave door Rogier van Alderwereld aan Pieter Sijen* [Instruction by Rogier van Alderwereld to Pieter Sijen], 28 Dec. 1731, fo. 229.

³ One exception is Valentyn, who was a minister of the Dutch Protestant Church in the VOC service and who claimed that the Dutch and other Europeans managed to convince the Siamese court to drop the practice of human sacrifice, which had been described by Van Vliet in the 1630s. Valentyn, *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indiën*, III: B, 60; Van Vliet, 'Description of Siam', 114-5.

APPENDIX 1

VOC *OPPERHOOFDEN* AND *RESIDENTEN* IN AYUTTHAYA

Lambert Jacobz Heijn	1608-1611
Maerten Houtman	1611-1612, 1612-1617
Cornelis van Nijenrode	1611-1612, 1617-1621
Jan Mibaise	1622
<i>Office closed</i>	1623-1624
Pieter van der Elst	1624-1626
Jacob Spanjaart	1626-1627 (acting)
Adriaen de Marees	1627-1629
<i>Office closed</i>	1629-1633
Joost Schouten	1633-1636
Jeremias van Vliet	1636-1641
Hendrick Jansz Nachtegael	1637-1638 (acting)
Reinier van Tzum (van 't Zum)	1641-1645
Isaac Moerdijk	1645
Jan van Muijden	1646-1650
Rijckloff van Goens	1650 (acting)
Volkerus Westerwolt	1650-1651 (acting)), 1652-1656
Hendrick Craijers	1651-1652
Jan van Rijck	1656-1662
Enoch Poolvoet	1662-1663 (acting), 1664-1668
<i>Office closed</i>	1663-1664
Johannes van der Spijck	1668-1669 (acting), 1672-1676
Nicolaes de Roij	1669-1672
Gilles Goosens	1676 (acting)
Dirk de Jongh	1676-1678
Aarnout Faa	1678-1685
Johannes Keijts	1685-1688
Pieter van den Hoorn	1688-1691
Joannes van Wagensvelt	1691-1692
Thomas van Son	1692-1697
Reinier Boom	1697-1698
Gideon Tant	1699-1703
Arnout Cleur	1703-1712
<i>Office closed</i>	1706
Dirk Blom	1712-1717
Wijbrant Blom	1717-1720
Hendrik Verburg	1721-1722
Gregorius Hendrik Praagman	1723-1726
Imel Christiaan Cock	1726-1727
Rogier van Alderwereld	1722-1723 (acting), 1728-1731
Pieter Sijen	1732-1733
Willem de Ghij	1734-1735, 1740-1741
Theodorus Jacobus van den Heuvel	1735-1740
<i>Office closed</i>	1741-1747
Nicolaas Bang	1747-1760
Nicolaas van Berendrecht	1760-1761 (acting)
Abraham Werndlij	1761-1765

Sources: VOC 1614-1765; W. Wijnaendts van Resandt, *De gezaghebbers der Oost-Indische Compagnie op hare buiten-comptoiren in Azië* (Amsterdam: Liebaert, 1944); Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand*; Ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat*.

APPENDIX 2

THE KINGS OF AYUTTHAYA
IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

King Naresuan	1590-1605
King Ekathotsarot	1605-1610/11
King Sisaowaphak	1610/11
King Songtham	1610/11 - 12 December 1628*
King Chetthathirat	December 1628 - August 1629
King Athityawong	August 1629 - September 1629
King Prasatthong	September 1629 - 7/8 August 1656*
King Chai	8 August 1656
King Sisuthammaracha	August - 29 October 1656*
King Narai	October 1656 - 11 July 1688*
King Phetracha	August 1688 - 5 February 1703*
King Sia	February 1703 - 9 February 1709*
King Thaisa	February 1709 - 13 January 1733*
King Borommakot	January 1733 - 29 April 1758*
King Uthumphon	May 1758 - 1 June 1758**
King Ekathat	June 1758 - March/April 1767

* Dates of decease according to the VOC sources.

** Date of abdication according to the French sources.

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862, 865, 879.

Overgekomen brieven en papieren (Letters and papers received)

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naturel eijnde der volbrachter tijt ende successie der Coningen van Siam, voor sooveel daer bij d'oude historien bekend sijn.

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